

Université de Montréal

**Moral responsibility (of the person): positive response to the
degradation of nature operated by man.**

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Résumé

Dans le cadre d'un projet de mémoire court, l'objectif de ce travail de recherche consiste à présenter une étude critique approfondie du principe de responsabilité dans l'œuvre de Hans Jonas afin de mieux mesurer sa portée dans l'évolution contemporaine des débats philosophiques en éthique environnementale. Dans un premier temps, il s'agira de présenter les arguments fondamentaux du principe de responsabilité dans son contexte historique (marqué par des références intellectuelles aux travaux de Bloch, Heidegger, Kant). Les réflexions jonassiennes face à la technique, face aux limites de l'anthropocentrisme moral constitueront des questions importantes de notre travail. La seconde partie de notre mémoire s'inscrit davantage dans la littérature contemporaine en éthique environnementale. De nombreuses études scientifiques démontrent que les enjeux environnementaux transnationaux les plus importants, dont le changement climatique, sont les résultats des interventions technologiques humaines. Comment peut-on retracer l'héritage philosophique de Jonas dans le contexte de ces débats contemporains en éthique environnementale? 1) L'éthique de la responsabilité a donné lieu aux notions et au langage du principe de précaution face aux « risques » (Beck). 2) De même, le débat sur la « valeur » de la nature a donné lieu à un formidable débat entre les défenseurs de la valeur intrinsèque de la nature (Callicott) et les défenseurs d'une approche pragmatique de l'anthropocentrisme moral (Norton). 3) En dernier lieu, la préséance de nos responsabilités envers autrui a donné lieu à une certaine conception de la justice intergénérationnelle à l'aune des enjeux environnementaux. Le but de ce mémoire consiste à mieux comprendre l'héritage philosophique de Hans Jonas à l'aide de ces trois illustrations des débats contemporains dans le champ de l'éthique environnementale.

Mot clés

Morale, Environnement, Ontologie, Déontologie, Écologie, Ethique, Responsabilité, Homme, Nature, Technologie

Abstract

In the context of a short dissertation, the aim of this research is to present a thorough critical study of the principle of responsibility in Hans Jonas's work in order to better measure its impact on the contemporary evolution of philosophical debates in environmental ethics. First, it is necessary to present the fundamental arguments of the principle of responsibility in its historical context (marked by intellectual references to the work of Martin Heidegger, Immanuel Kant and Ernst Bloch). Important questions in our work examine the Jonassian reflections on technology toward the limits of moral anthropocentrism. The second part of our dissertation will be focused more on the contemporary literature of environmental ethics. Numerous scientific studies show that the most important transnational environmental issues, including climate change, are the result of human technological interventions. How can we trace Jonas's philosophical heritage in the context of these contemporary debates on environmental ethics? First, the ethics of responsibility gave rise to the notions and language of the precautionary principle against "risks" (Beck, 2002). Similarly, the concept of the "value of nature" has given rise to a formidable debate between defenders of the intrinsic value of nature (Callicott, 2010) and defenders of a more pragmatic approach to moral anthropocentrism (Norton, 2010). Lastly, the precedence of our responsibilities towards others has given rise to a certain conception of intergenerational justice in light of environmental issues. The purpose of this thesis is to better understand Jonas's philosophical heritage using these three illustrations of contemporary debates in the field of environmental ethics.

Keywords

Moral, Environment, Ontology, Deontology, Ecology, Ethics, Responsibility, Man, Nature, Technology

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Introduction

With industrialization and more rapid communication, it became possible for man to transport, transform and exploit natural resources in a very short period of time with a reduced workforce. Incapable of defending itself, “nature” has since lost its value and organization day-by-day, with global warming and deforestation being two sources of blame. Man turned to “nature”, not to protect and save it, but rather to make it a resource and center of exploitation. This has led us, in the 21st century, towards an unprecedented ecological crisis. Ironically, this ecological crisis not only puts nature in danger, but also the life and existence of the human species on Earth; due to the fact that the existence of life is made possible on Earth because of the order and organization of that same “nature”. This allows us to understand that man, consciously or unconsciously, despite his lack of interest in the protection of “nature”, must act differently and change his conceptions of nature to ensure the existence of life on Earth in the future. It is in this spirit that some, concerned by and preoccupied with the degradation and atrocious exploitation of nature, seek to converge towards a new ethical view that will defend the cause of nature against the dangers and risks linked to this modern civilization to which man is oriented today.

This new ethical view deals with all of the questions that relate to man in his relationship with “nature”. Hans Jonas defined this concept in his work, “An ethics for the future.”¹ However, conceptual differences of “Ecology” reveal sharp divergences

¹ “An ethics for the future» meaning a contemporary ethics concerned with a future we seek to protect for our descendants from the consequences of our actions in the present. This task has become necessary because our actions today, in the form of global technology, threaten not only the near but even the distant future. Thus, moral responsibility demands that we take into consideration the welfare of those who, without being consulted, will later be affected by what we are doing now. Hans Jonas, and Vogel,

among thinkers and philosophers who take on the task of defending the cause of “nature”. According to J. Baird Callicott in his book entitled *In Defense of the Land Ethics: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, the German philosopher and biologist Ernst Haeckel was the first person to use the term “ecology” in 1866, when he was trying to find a term to represent the study of relationships between organisms and their environment. In the same book, in 2010, Callicott further defined ecology as the study of the relations of organisms with one another and with their natural environment. According to Callicott, various conceptions of the term “ecology” divide philosophers of “nature” into three categories, namely: ecocentrists, extensionists and all of the other philosophers of nature who see ecology as a sort of applied ethics. Ecocentrists consider themselves as fervent defenders of the biotic by fighting for the beauty, integrity and stability of the soil, water, plants and animals on Earth. The extensionists, on the other hand, defend an ethics directed toward the welfare of animals. Consequently, their main goal, far from defending “nature” itself, is the protection of animals, hence the origin of the concept “animal liberation”. The third and last category of ecologists is indeed all of those who have oriented ecology towards a type of applied ethics; they focus on the political, economic and technical aspects of the ecological issues of our era. According to the description and vision of these three categories of ecologists, we can relate Hans Jonas to the third group: those who consider ecology as a type of applied ethics, aiming to defend the cause of “nature” against the risks and threats related to science and technology.

Lawrence. *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1996. P. 99

² Hans Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 66

Jonas was born in Germany to a Jewish family in 1903. He studied philosophy and theology alongside philosophers such as Husserl and Heidegger. He emigrated to Palestine, Canada and the U. S in 1933, 1939 and 1955, respectively, and eventually died in New York in February of 1993. He worked as a professor in all three countries. Jonas was known in the field of environmental ethics for his book written in German in 1979 under the title, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung, Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*” and translated into English in 1984 under the title, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. In this book, Jonas opposes any anthropocentric concept of ethics or morals supported by his predecessors, in which man was considered the center of everything. He chooses this latter ethical stance to prevent limiting “ethics” to human beings only, and also to extend it to “nature” by acknowledging nature’s value and its essential role in the maintenance of human life on Earth. In Jonas opinion, we cannot ensure maintenance and existence of the human species, or of future generations, if we do not take responsibility for defending and protecting “nature”, on which we are all dependent and an integral part. As Jonas stated in his book, *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*:

“We have intimated that one way go further and say that the common destiny of man and nature, newly discovered in the common danger, makes us rediscover nature’s own dignity and commands us to care for her integrity over and above the utilitarian aspect.”²

To use the words of Arno Munster, in his book, *Principe responsabilité ou principe espérance*:

² Hans Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 66

“Nul ne peut plus dire: que l’homme soit, sans dire: que la nature soit. Voilà pourquoi le oui à l’être, que la vie prononce spontanément est devenu au niveau humain devoir-être, obligation.”³

Jonas was urged to take action when he realized the dangers and threats that man exposes “nature” to, especially the rise of utopian Marxism in the second half of the 20th century headed by the philosopher Bloch. Jonas felt compelled to curb the advancement of technology, which he believed is at the heart of all these dangers and threats that nature is facing today. As he mentioned in his book, *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*:

“The danger derives from the excessive dimensions of the scientific-technological-industrial civilization. What we call the baconian program – namely, to aim knowledge at power over nature, and to utilize power over nature for the improvement of the human lot – lacked indeed in its capitalist execution from the outset the rationality as well as the justice with which it could have been conjoined.”⁴

To curb the advancement of the technology, Jonas invited all individuals, parents and politicians to first be more aware of their actions, which can damage, directly or indirectly, “nature”, and, second, to assume their responsibility in order to preserve the existence of future generations. It is through this idea that Jonas, in his book *“The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age”*⁵, warns all humans to “not compromise the conditions for an indefinite continuation of humanity

³ Arno, Munters. *Principe responsabilité ou principe espérance*. Le bord de L’eau. 2010. P. 15

⁴ Hans, Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 69

⁵ Jonas’s final major work, *The imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethic for the Technology Age* (1979), connects his speculation about nature to the domain of ethics. He thinks that unless we can think of nature as being a source of value, and not a mere resource upon which we project our interests, we will be unable to believe in the importance of limits to our technological remaking of nature. Such limits are especially urgent given our increasing control over behavior, the process of dying, and even the genetic makeup of life. Hans Jonas, and Vogel, Lawrence. *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1996. P. 3

on earth”⁶. Jonas, based on the moral theory of Immanuel Kant and the existentialism of Martin Heidegger, gave rise to a new ecological imperative, baptised under the name of “Responsibility Principle”.

In the first part of this research, we will separately address the works of these two authors, Heidegger and Kant, in order to bring out the ontological and deontological foundation of the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”. We will then analyze the works of Bloch, in particular his “Principle of Hope”, in order to understand and articulate Jonas’s position regarding technology as it relates to Marxism. In the final analysis, we will scrutinize in greater detail Jonas’s work, in particular his “Responsibility Principle”, with the objective of highlighting its importance and impact on the current ecological movement.

Jonas has worked on Gnosticism, bioethics and the environmental ethics, however his work is not well known in the field of environmental ethics in North America. Many internal and external factors could explain this unpopularity. First of all, the lack of clarity, sufficiency and pertinence of which Jonas's works are the objects of criticism plays much to this unpopularity. Indeed, his “Responsibility Principle”, rather than defending the cause of “nature”, is only a means used by Jonas to defend the cause of humanity and the preservation of human existence. Secondly, the lack of persuasion and involvement of his work in the field of environmental ethics are also key components of this unpopularity. Thirdly, the lack of importance that they give to philosophy in North America comparatively to Europe also plays a role in his unpopularity. As he stated in his book entitled *Memoirs*:

⁶ Hans, Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. The University Press of Chicago. 1984. P.11

“In America people don’t really believe in philosophy in the sense in which it’s pursued in France or Germany. At any rate, I was taken less seriously by the professional philosophers in America than in Germany. Another factor may be that although ecological topics are discussed in America, they’re apparently far less prominent than in Europe – and in the political arena least at all.”⁷

Some even say that Jonassian ethics is much more an ethics of humanity than an environmental ethics. In brief, the question we are trying to answer in this work is: does the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” have an importance and/or impact in the contemporary environmental ethics debates? If so, how could we explain its importance and/or impact?

The second part of this endeavour will be devoted to the analysis of the works of three contemporary philosophers in environmental ethics: Ulrich Beck with his “Principle of Precaution” versus “risks,” J. Baird Callicott with his concept of “Intrinsic Value” of nature, and Bryan Norton with his approach to the moral anthropocentrism of contemporary philosophy. The analysis of the works of these three philosophers will allow us to trace and answer our questions about the importance and impact of the ethics of responsibility of Jonas in contemporary philosophical debates.

⁷ Hans Jonas and Wiese, Christian. *Memoirs*. 1st ed., Waltham, Mass: Hanover, Brandeis University Press: Published by University Press of New England, 2008. P. 210

Part I

I. The genesis of Hans Jonas's "Responsibility Principle", and its position in regards to technology

We start the first part of this research by addressing three philosophers: Martin Heidegger, Immanuel Kant and Ernst Bloch, in order to trace the origin of Jonas's "Responsibility Principle" and Jonas's stance on the progress of technology praised by Ernst Bloch in his "Principle of Hope". In the first section, we will examine the work of Heidegger, in particular his concept of "Being", in order to show the ontological foundation of Jonas's "Responsibility Principle". In the second section, we will analyse Kant's "Moral Obligation", in order to deduce the deontological foundation of Jonas's "Responsibility Principle". In the third and last section, we will address Bloch's perspective according to his "Principle of Hope", to better elucidate the opposition that exists in Jonas's "Responsibility Principle" and the concrete utopia and Marxism of Bloch.

I. 1 Ontological foundation of Hans Jonas's "Responsibility Principle"

In the first section of this research, by addressing the theory of "Being" of M. Heidegger, we will trace the ontological foundation of Hans Jonas's "Principle Responsibility." According to Heidegger, man as a "Being" possesses two correlational abilities that allow him to prove his existence among other "Beings". These two abilities are his openness and relationship to others. We will first examine the theory of "Being" of M. Heidegger in order to introduce his concept of "*Dasein*". We will then analyze the two correlational abilities that allow man to attest to his existence and his singularity as an "existent" living among other "existents".

I. 1. a) Hans Jonas and the “*Dasein*” of Martin Heidegger

In this sub-section we will first address the “*Dasein*” in Heidegger’s work that will allow us to understand the ontological concept of man in the “Responsibility Principle” of Jonas. Of all the philosophers that impacted and influenced Jonas during his time, Heidegger remained one of the most important ones for our work, since it was through him, and especially through his concept of “*Dasein*,” that Jonas was able to give rise to his concept of man. According to Jonas in his “Responsibility Principle”, man is a being that constantly needs “others” in order to have and prove his existence in the world. It is necessary to first explain this concept of Heidegger’s “*Dasein*” in order to trace the metaphysics of Heidegger at the roots of Jonas’s “Responsibility Principle” that will prove that man completely depends on “nature” because of his openness and relational abilities with “others”.

Heidegger, in his quest to grasp the meaning of “Being”, has highlighted the intertwining of “being as such” and the finitude of man as “existent” among other “existents”. This usage of the Heideggerian “Being” is in fact the “*Dasein*”, which literally means, “being there”. In other words, “human existence”, thought to be as “human presence in the world” or “Being in the world”, is the same as using the term “*Dasein*”. It is in this perspective of the concept of man that Jonas, in his book *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, maintains:

“The existence of man in the world had been a first and unquestionable given, from which all idea of obligation in human conduct started out.”⁸

⁸ Hans Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. The University Press of Chicago. 1984. P. 10

However, the Heideggerian's concept of "Being" is not always written in the same way and does not always have the same meaning in Heidegger's writings; sometimes he writes "*Dasein*" and other times "*Da-sein*". This small nuance is actually created by the different perspectives Heidegger gives to the concept "Being". He uses "*Dasein*" in the existentialist perspective of man. As Jonas mentions it in his book, *Mortality and Morality*:

"The concept of substance disappears, everything is always 'in process,' so to speak, and what was formerly called the subject is now called '*Dasein*'. This extremely general and abstract infinitive becomes the technical designation for being in its specifically human forms, indeed for individual concrete persons as they experience themselves from within."⁹

Starting from the concept of man to arrive at the concept of "Being" means that "Being" is considered much more than man. Etymologically, "*Dasein*" means, "Being there" or "being in the world".

According to Jonas, the term "*Da-sein*" is used in a more metaphysical way, where we must start from the concept of "Being" in order to arrive at the concept of man. In this sense, man is considered much more than the "Being". Roger Verneaux sums this up by saying:

"[...] On ne doit pas négliger un artifice d'écriture apparu dans les dernières oeuvres de Heidegger: il écrit tantôt "*Dasein*" tantôt "*Da-sein*", afin de marquer une différence de perspective. Le premier terme correspond à l'analyse existentielle, où l'on part de l'homme pour arriver à l'Être, où l'on considère l'Être par rapport à l'homme. Le second correspond à la métaphysique, où l'on part de l'Être pour arriver à l'homme, où l'on considère l'homme par

⁹ Hans Jonas, and Vogel, Lawrence. *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1996. P. 45

rapport à l'Être. Le 'Dasein' est l'homme en tant qu'ouvert à l'Être et le 'Da-sein' est l'homme en tant que lieu où apparaît.”¹⁰

According to Jonas, the “*Da-sein*” is also a compound to distinguish a special form of being among other forms of “Being”. As Jonas states it in his work, titled *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*:

“The ‘da’ indicates that this special form of being surrounds itself with a horizon toward which it lives.”¹¹

Jonas did not create the foundation of his “Responsibility Principle” on both Heideggerian concepts of “Being”: “*Dasein*” and “*Da-sein*”. Instead, he tried to lead his work only towards the Heideggerian concept of “*Dasein*”, by highlighting the threats against the existence of man on Earth. However, the political view difference of Jonas and Heidegger forced Jonas to break away from Heidegger and his philosophy. Jonas, a Jewish philosopher born in Germany, lost his mother in the Holocaust to the Nazis and later discovered that his former professor and mentor, Heidegger, defended and supported the National Socialist Party (Nazi) during his infamous rectoral address in 1933. For this and other reasons, Hans Jonas took his position against Heidegger and his philosophy. As Jonas mentions in his book, *Memoirs*:

“After the war, my work in philosophy was marked initially by my renunciation of Heidegger’s existentialism in favor of my philosophy of life. One impetus for this step was certainly my shock at Heidegger’s behavior during the Nazi period, including his inaugural address when he was installed as rector of the University of Freiburg on 27 May 1933, and his shabby and disgraceful treatment of Husserl.”¹²

¹⁰ Roger Verneaux. *Histoire de la philosophie contemporaine*. Beauchesne, Paris. 1960. P. 165.

¹¹ Hans, Jonas, and Vogel, Lawrence. *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1996. P. 45

¹² Hans, Jonas, and Wiese, Christian. *Memoirs*. 1st ed., Waltham, Mass.: Hanover, Brandeis University Press. Published by University Press of New England, 2008. P. 187

In the same book, Jonas continues expressing the influence that Heidegger had on him and the reason why he chose to break away from his philosophy. Jonas was disappointed and betrayed by Heidegger's behavior and attitude toward the Nazis. And considered Heidegger as a shameful and disgraceful example in the field of philosophy:

“Given Heidegger's influence on me, his behavior was a cruel and bitter disappointment, not only in him as a person but also in the power of philosophy to arm people against such folly. In the originality of his thought, Heidegger remains a powerful figure in intellectual history, a path breaker who opened up new territory. That the most profound thinker of our time fell in with the goose-stepping brown-shirted battalions struck me as a catastrophic failure on the part of philosophy, as a disgraceful moment in world history, as the bankrupting of philosophical thought.”¹³

In the light of Heidegger's concept of “*Dasein*”, we will now examine the ontological foundation of Jonas's perspective on the “Responsibility Principle”. This concept of “*Dasein*”, as the imbrication between the “Being” and man, allows us to see in man the ability of openness and the relation that he has with “nature”. It is exactly because of the openness and ability to relate to “others” that enables man to either safeguard or destroy the other “existents”.

I. 1. b) Hans Jonas and man's openness and ability to relate to “others”

Heidegger considered man as an opening to “Being,” or the “area of illumination of Being”. In turn, man is only able to find the meaning of his existence through his openness and his relationship to others. Heidegger also supports that those two related abilities are at the core of man, and this is the reason we consider the theory of “Being” as the ontological foundation for the “Responsibility Principle” of Jonas.

¹³ Hans, Jonas, and Wiese, Christian. *Memoirs*. 1st ed., Waltham, Mass.: Hanover, Brandeis University Press. Published by University Press of New England, 2008. P. 187

Jonas sustains a new “concept of ethics”¹⁴ within his “Responsibility Principle”, where man’s openness and relation with “nature” allows him to take responsibility by protecting and safeguarding “nature”. Jonas embraced this new view on ethics in order to preserve the survival of future generations. He also supported the Heideggerian ontological view; although he did not view man as a “Being” who wants to take responsibility for others, he considers man as a “Being” who accepts his own fragility and presence as an “existent”. By understanding his fragility and limits as an “existent” through the phenomenon that we call “death”, he is able to feel responsible for the safety of his own life and the maintenance of life of future generations. This is where Jonas and Heidegger’s opinion converge: man’s consciousness is defined by his fragility and his ability to do whatever it takes to maintain his existence among “others”. By extension, man is also responsible for protecting and safeguarding “nature”, on which his life and his existence are dependent. We can better understand this convergence in a quote from Jonas in his book entitled *Mortality and Morality*:

“Essential to the idea of humanity is the capacity for responsibility. The duty to ensure the future existence of mankind includes the duty to preserve his essence by not undermining the conditions in which man can show himself to be ‘the executor of a trust which only he can see, but did not create’.”¹⁵

Moreover, one can explicitly understand the ontological basis of Jonas’s “Responsibility Principle” with the motto “safeguard nature in order to maintain the

¹⁴ Jonas's final major work, the imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethic for the Technology Age (1979) connects his speculation about nature to the domain of ethics. He thinks that unless we can think of nature as being a source of value, and not a mere resource upon which we project our interests, we will be unable to believe in the importance of limits to our technological remaking of nature. Such limits are especially urgent given our increasing control over behavior, the process of dying, and even the genetic makeup of life. Hans, Jonas, and Vogel, Lawrence. *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1996. P. 3

¹⁵ Jonas, Hans. *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 2001. P. 283

existence of humanity on earth". Jonas reiterates that the human subject is capable of knowing the objective reality of his existence, or at least the openness to "Being", in a double sense. For example, as long as man recognizes himself as existing, he will do what he must in order to prevent annihilating himself:

"Man is the only being known to us who can assume responsibility. The fact that he can assume it means that he is liable to it. This capacity for taking responsibility already signifies that man is subject to its imperative."¹⁶

Jonas's ontological foundation relies upon the "Responsibility Principle" in the interpretation of the Heideggerian theory of "Being" in particular in the concept of "*Dasein*". However, according to Pommier, his interpretation of ethics does not rely on the openness of the "Being". His new interpretation of ethics is, rather, centered in the individual ability of man to show his responsibility to maintain and preserve the existence of the humanity. This creates a "divergence in the work of these two authors"¹⁷, even though they share some common ground. We will be able to trace this divergence to Hans Jonas's concept of the value of "nature" in the fourth section of the first part of this work. Jonas will then be able to affirm the openness and the ability of man to relate to "nature" not only as an instrument at our disposal, but also as an end in itself that deserves respect, rights and protection. We can better understand Jonas's interpretation of Heidegger's theory of "Being" with this statement by Vogel Lawrence:

¹⁶ Hans, Jonas, and Vogel, Lawrence. *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1996 P. 101

¹⁷ "In Heidegger's analysis of existence, there is no room for nature possessing intrinsic value, for nature is assumed to be a realm of 'un-meaning' (sinnlos), only taking on significance in relation to our workaday world...The world which is concretely analyzed by contemporary existentialism...is only our historical world of selfhood and inter-human relations." Karl Löwith, "Nature, History and Existentialism," in *Nature, History and Existentialism*, trans. Arnold Levinson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995. P. 28, 37.

“The existential interpretation to include the biological facts allows Jonas to ground an ethics in the depths of Being: to find value in nature and so to conceive of our freedom as subject to a heteronomous source of authority. The goodness of Being, reality, or nature opens up a ‘genuine present’ because it gives us a future worth caring for. This is the meaning of Jonas’s pointedly anti-Heideggerian motto: ‘Responsibility is the moral complement to the ontological constitution of our temporality’.”¹⁸

With Heidegger’s theory of “Being”, we have shown the importance of his concept of “*Dasein*” in the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”. The concept of “*Dasein*” allows Hans Jonas to prove that man ontologically has in him two correlational abilities, namely: his openness and his relational abilities with “others”. According to Jonas, by following the Heideggerian theory of “Being”, man is able to maintain his existence on Earth because of these two correlational abilities he has in his essence that allow him to open up to himself and relate to “nature”.

I. 2 Deontological foundation of Hans Jonas’s “Responsibility Principle”

We have discussed the ontological foundation of the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” from Heidegger’s perspective. In this subsection, we will aim to underpin the deontological foundation of the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”, following the thoughts of the philosopher Immanuel Kant. Firstly, we will demonstrate that man, in addition to be an “existent” ontologically capable of understanding his own existence by virtue of his openness and ability to relate to “others”, is also an “existent” that is endowed with the ability of “will” and an intrinsic value. Secondly, we will then analyse the categorical and hypothetical imperative of Kant in order to bring out the foundation of Jonas’s “ecological imperative”. According to Jonas, man, in addition to his abilities of

¹⁸ Hans, Jonas, and Vogel, Lawrence. *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1996. P. 14-15

“will” and rationality, also possesses feelings that guide his actions in his efforts to maintain the existence of humanity on Earth and, by extension, the preservation of “nature”.

I. 2. a) Hans Jonas and man’s ability of “will” with Immanuel Kant

“Will”, as a philosophical term, is generally defined as “a particular sort of capacity of rational agents to choose a course of action from among various alternatives.”¹⁹ According to Kant, this connotation remains *idem*: an ability that is found only in man as a rational being and allows him to orient his actions in the guidance of laws and principles derived from his rationality. However, Kant explains in his book entitled *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, that these laws and principles must be derived from the rationality of man, apart from all of man’s inclinations or feelings:

“The will is conceived as a faculty of determining oneself to action in accordance with the conception of certain laws. And such a faculty can be found only in rational beings. Now that which serves the will as the objective ground of its self-determination is the end, and if this is assigned by reason alone, it must hold for all rational beings.”²⁰

Jonas, contrary to Kant, did not only see man as a “rational being” acting only in the guidance of his rationality. According to Jonas, man, in addition to his rationality, also possesses feelings that can orient and motivate him to act by virtue of his interests and his inclinations. As Jonas states in his work entitled *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*:

¹⁹ O’connor, Timothy, “Free Will”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/freewill/>>.

²⁰ Immanuel, Kant. *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott. Mineola, New York, 2005. P. 45

“Being good-in-itself, addresses an ‘ought’ whenever it comes under the custody of a will. Though such a will must be infused with a feeling of responsibility in order to be moved by the object that obligates it, it must experience itself as responding to a transcendent summons in order for the moral sentiment ‘to be in its own eyes more than a mere impulse’.”²¹

In contrast to animals that act only according to instinct, man acts according to a value or to something he determines worthwhile. Moreover, when “will” enters into man simultaneously with his capacity of reason, “intelligence”²² allows him to conceptualize the existence and veracity of other “Beings”. It is in this idea that we understand that “will” is the starting point of all human activities. Some even say that, far from being the capacity of intelligence, it is rather the abilities of “will” and rationality that distinguishes man from animals. Using Kant’s words to elucidate this idea, Jonas states:

“‘Reverence for the law’, for the sublimity of the unconditional ‘thou shalt’ that issues from reason. In other words, reason itself becomes the source of an affect and its ultimate object – not, of course, reason as a cognitive faculty, but reason as a principle of universality, to which the will is enjoined to conform.”²³

Jonas, as is the case with predecessors, sees in man this ability of “will” as the primary reason for his evolution among other “existents”. According to him, it is this ability of “will” that allows man to change and improve his relation with “nature” by taking responsibility for his actions toward “nature”. For Jonas, if man by his faculty of

²¹ Hans, Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. The University Press of Chicago. 1984. P. 86

²² It is true that both will and intelligence are faculties of man, due to their function and their correlation that are expressed by the coherence that man manifests in his choices and decisions. Intelligence in man has, in fact, a nature that holds itself in conjunction with a body: it is abstract and discursive. Intelligence also has a nature that consists of being able to apprehend the truth. It is animated by a natural appetite for knowledge and understanding, through a curiosity that translates into astonishment at the raw facts.

²³ Hans, Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 85

“will” has power over “nature”, it is not in fact a power to exterminate the existence of life on earth, but is rather a power to protect himself and ensure the very existence of future generations on Earth.

I. 2. b) Hans Jonas and the concept of value of man with Immanuel Kant

By following Kant’s thoughts, we are going to demonstrate the difference existing between Jonas and Kant in accordance with their conception of the value of man and “nature”. Jonas and Kant both agree that man has not only a faculty of “will” but also an intrinsic value that makes man a unique and different “Being” among the other “beings”. Kant sees this distinction between man and other “existents” not in a mutual relation with “others”, but rather with respect to dominance and exploitation. He also considers all other non-rational “existents” as “things” that only have extrinsic value. Quoting Kant:

“Man and generally any rational being exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will, but in all his actions, whether they concern himself or other rational beings, must be always regarded at the same time as an end.”²⁴

Jonas diverges from Kant, not because of the intrinsic value that Kant confers to man, but because of the contrast Kant makes between man and “nature” by affirming that man is the only “existent” that has an intrinsic value. While he considers man a rational “Being” endowed with intrinsic worth, he considers nature to be a means to serve the needs of man. In this sense and according to him, it is quite natural for man to exploit and even over-exploit “nature” without taking into account future consequences. As Jonas states it in his book, entitled “*Philosophical Essays: from Ancient Creed to Technological Man*”:

²⁴ Immanuel, Kant. *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott. Mineola, New York, 2005. P. 45

“Insofar as it is the fate of man, as affected by the condition of nature, which makes us care about the preservation of nature. Such care admittedly still retains the anthropocentric focus of all classical ethics.”²⁵

For Jonas, it is precisely this extrinsic conception of “nature” that we must redefine if we want to preserve the existence of humanity. It is in this spirit that Jonas insists on the redefinition of ethics as a non-anthropocentric ethic that should see in “nature” not only a means but also an end in itself that deserves respect and protection.

I. 2. c) The categorical and hypothetical imperatives of Immanuel Kant

In this subsection, we will approach the models of “Moral Obligation” of Immanuel Kant in order to understand and better elucidate the deontological foundation of Hans Jonas's “Responsibility Principle”. According to Kant, in addition to his faculty of “will” and his intrinsic value, man is also endowed with a sense of duty and obligation. In Kant’s view, this sense of duty and obligation can be interpreted in two different ways, either as a categorical imperative or a hypothetical imperative. We can interpret the sense of duty and obligation of man as a categorical imperative, according to Kant, when this sense of obligation is applying to man as an “existent”, without any consideration of humans’ interest, but only because of the “rationality” and the “will” that man is endowed with. As Jonas mentions in his book entitled *Philosophical Essays: from Ancient Creed to Technological Man*:

“With this imperative we are, strictly speaking, not responsible to the future human individuals but to the idea of Man, which is such that it demands the presence of its embodiment in the world.”²⁶

²⁵ Hans, Jonas. *Philosophical Essays: from Ancient Creed to Technological Man*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1974. P. 9

On the other hand, according to Kant, we can also interpret this duty and obligation of man as a hypothetical imperative, where this sense of obligation applies to man in a conditional form, not only because of his rationality and his ability of “will”, but also because of the feelings that man is endowed with. We can better understand the difference between these two Kantian interpretations of the sense of obligation of man when Jonas states:

“Kant’s differentiation between hypothetical and categorical imperative applies here, too.

The hypothetical (of which there are many) says: if there are human beings in the future – which depends on our procreation – then such and such duties are to be observed by us toward them in advance. But the categorical commands only that there be human beings, with the accent equally on the ‘*that*’ and the ‘*what*’ of the obligatory existence. For me, I admit, this imperative is the only one, which really fits the Kantian sense of the categorical, that is, the unconditional.”²⁷

The Kantian hypothetical imperative will play a leading role in Jonas’s development of the “Responsibility Principle” and its ecological imperative, which we will look at in the next section. With Jonas, in addition of the “rationality” and the ability of “will”, the feeling of fear will have a main role in the foundation of his ecological imperative. Despite the rational and intrinsic dimension that it attributes to man by following the Kantian model, this new Jonassian imperative takes a completely different path from Kant’s “Moral Obligation” in several ways. The Jonassian imperative is not only based on the rationality and the ability of “will” as it is in the Kantian categorical imperative, nor does it view “nature” only as a means for man. Hans Jonas’s imperative,

²⁶ Hans, Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 78

²⁷ Hans, Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 78

contrary to that of Kant, is based on a heuristic of fear and embraces man not only as an end in himself, but also confers to “nature” a value in itself. As Jonas states in his book entitled *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*:

“My main fear rather relates to the apocalypse threatening from the nature of the unintended dynamics of technical civilization as such, inherent in its structure, whereto it drifts willy-nilly and with exponential acceleration: the apocalypse of the ‘too much’ with exhaustion, pollution, desolation of the planet.”²⁸

Overall, we have briefly reviewed the works of these two philosophers, namely Heidegger and Kant, in order to reveal the ontological and deontological foundations of Hans Jonas’s “Responsibility Principle”, which is in fact the central point of this endeavour. We have demonstrated ontologically that man is an “existent” who possesses an openness and relational ability and who needs “others” in order to affirm and maintain his existence in the world. With Hans Jonas, this openness and relational ability will protect and safeguard “nature” in order to maintain and preserve the existence of humanity, since human life depends on the wellbeing of “nature” in a “*sine qua non*” way. Moreover, we have highlighted the deontological foundation of Jonas’s “Responsibility Principle”, by addressing the Kantian interpretation of the sense of duty and obligation of man as a rational “Being” that possesses an ability of “will” and an intrinsic value. In light of the Kantian hypothetical imperative, Jonas establishes the basis of his “ecological imperative”, where he considers man not only as a rational “Being” possessing the ability of “will” and an end, but also as a rational “Being” endowed with feelings that orient and motivate his actions toward the maintenance of humanity on Earth, and by extension the safeguard of “nature”.

²⁸ Hans, Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 78

I. 3 Hans Jonas and the “Principle of Hope” of Ernst Bloch

We will now address the “Principle of Hope” of Ernst Bloch in order to understand the position of Jonas toward Marxism, which is the culminating and central idea of the “Principle of Hope”. Unlike Jonas, who sees technology as a threat to humanity, Bloch sees it as redemption, the cornerstone that will enable man to really free himself and achieve the authenticity of his being. He argues that technological progress will enable man to solve problems brought about by hunger, dearth of labour and social inequality characteristic prior to the nineteenth century.

I. 3. a) Hans Jonas and Ernst Bloch’s concrete utopia and “Marxism” project

As already mentioned in the introduction, a myriad of problems facing the world prior to the nineteenth century led man into unprecedented modernization, based on the abundance of material wealth and the over-exploitation of “nature”. Among the fervent defenders of this unprecedented modernization, we also count the philosopher Bloch. With his “Principle of Hope”, Bloch praises a concrete utopia and “Marxism”²⁹ in which he portrays technology as leading to the advent of the true state of human beings rather than a threat to humanity. According to Bloch, the true man is yet to come. In order to discover the authentic “Being” in us, we must first seek to entrust ourselves to science and technology. Only through science and technology will we be able to experience leisure and free ourselves from obstacles that lead to depression, misery and discrimination. Jonas offers these clear statements at the end of his book of propaganda

²⁹ Marxism as a philosophy of history and social change highlights the social relations of work in different economic modes of production in its analysis of social inequalities and exploitation, including relations of domination such as racism and sexism. (Marx 1844, 1950, 1906–9; Marx and Engels 1848, 1850; Engels 1942) Ferguson, Ann, Hennessy, Rosemary and Nagel, Mechthild, “Feminist Perspectives on Class and Work”. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/feminism-class/>>.

entitled, *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*:

“The first requirement for utopia is material *plenty* for satisfying the needs of all; the second, ease of appropriating the plenty. For the formal essence of utopia, as we shall see, is *leisure*, and leisure can only exist with comfort, with an assured supply of the goods of life and a minimum of toil in obtaining them, since leisure is formally just *freedom* from toil in the service of need (or of wish fulfillment in general). A perfected technology can procure both these—abundance and its foil-free command— [...]”³⁰

However, Jonas has never hidden his contempt of opposition to the utopian Marxism of Bloch. It is exactly against this chimerical and Marxist conception of human existence on Earth by which Jonas gave light to the “Responsibility Principle” not only demonstrating his clear opposition to Bloch, but also alerting us to the dangers associated with this modernization. According to Jonas, this concrete and Marxist utopia implicitly contains the germs for the destruction of “nature” and the consequent annihilation of humanity. Even if Bloch’s concrete utopia and Marxism project did not seek to threaten the ideas of human evolution or civilization, Munster emphasizes more clearly the opposition of these two authors at the beginning of his book entitled *Principe responsabilité ou principe espérance*:

“ c’est contre l’optimisme militant de Bloch invoquant l’espérance utopique, et contre la vision marxiste de l’histoire et du « royaume de la liberté » émancipant l’homme de l’aliénation par le travail, que Jonas défend, jusqu’au tout dernier chapitre de son ouvrage consacré à la « critique de l’utopie [...]”³¹

³⁰ Hans, Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. The University Press of Chicago. 1984. P. 186-187

³¹ Arno, Munster. *Principe responsabilité ou principe espérance*. Ed. Le bord de L’eau, 2010. P. 18

Jonas opposes Bloch's marxist utopia further. According to him, if religion was considered the opium of the people, it is actually technology, promoted and defended by Bloch with his marxist utopia that is in fact the opium of the people. In *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, Jonas stated: "marxist utopia, involving the fullest use of super technology, served as an 'eschatologically' radicalized version of what the worldwide technological impetus of our civilization is moving toward anyway. Thus the critique of utopia is implicitly a critique of technology in the anticipation of its extreme possibilities."³² According to him, the only way we can protect ourselves against this "false hope and illusion" spread by Bloch is to assume our responsibility as inhabitants of this planet. By taking our responsibility, we will be able to curb the threats and dangers facing both "nature" and the future of the humanity. We may better understand Hans Jonas's position against the rise and the progress of technology with a quotation from Eric Pommier's book, entitled *Ontologie de la vie et éthique de responsabilité selon Hans Jonas*:

"La possibilité d'une démondanésation de la vie et d'une destruction du monde humain, la perspective de voir l'homme perdre le sens de ses possibilités les plus propres et de voir la vie perdre les siennes propres ainsi que la dynamique qui prépare souterrainement ces possibilités, révèle d'une part l'être-fragile de l'humanité et de la vie, d'autre part notre devoir de la préserver. La crainte pour la vie et l'humanité, qu'actualise le potentiel technologique, porte au premier plan notre devoir de responsabilité envers l'être de la vie et de l'homme, en tant que nous sommes tout autant le poison que le remède. "³³

³² Hans, Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. The University Press of Chicago. 1984. P. 201

³³ Éric, Pommier. *Ontologie de la vie et éthique de la responsabilité selon Hans Jonas*. Librairie Philosophie J. Vrin, Paris, 2013. P. 165

In this excerpt, Pommier lends insight into why Jonas was obliged to take action against the Concrete utopia and Marxism Bloch's project. According to Pommier, Jonas believes that rapid progress of technology not only puts "nature" in danger but puts his own existence in danger, too. Pommier argues that this is logical, considering that life is dependent on the stability and the well-being of "nature". As Jonas stated in his book, entitled *Memoirs*:

"Suddenly philosophy's new assignment became one that had to be undertaken together with biologists, physicists, and theoretical economists – for the sake of saving life on earth. Well, that was my position, and we can't afford a utopian notion of individual fulfillment, of achieving an ideal society; it's simply too dangerous. First of all, such a goal is overreaching, and second, under current conditions it can lead straight to destruction – by raising people's expectations instead of moderating them. This was my objection to Ernst Bloch's Principle of Hope."³⁴

We have addressed the concrete utopia and Marxism Bloch's project in order to bring out the opposition of Jonas towards technology and the Blochian "Principle of Hope". Bloch, with his concrete utopia and Marxism's project, advocates for the progress of technology since, according to him, it is only with technology that man can finally discover his true being and free himself from all of the social and economic constraints that prevent him from having leisure in life.

I. 3. b) Hans Jonas and the creation and use of technology with Ernst Bloch

We have previously discussed Bloch's concrete and Marxist utopia in order to show Jonas's opposition to the progress of science and technology. Now, we will try to understand why and how, according to Jonas, the progress of technology is really a threat

³⁴ Hans, Jonas and Wiese, Christian. *Memoirs*. 1st ed. Waltham, Mass.: Hanover, Brandeis University Press ; Published by University Press of New England, 2008. P. 211

to “nature” and humanity. As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, “technology” plays a predominant role in the works of these two antagonistic authors. Their connotations and conceptions of “technology” do not converge. Through the lens of Bloch, we see technology and science creating a much more optimistic and flourishing world where mankind could reach his highest potential—a zenith, which he hopes to reach but previously never knew how to reach. For Bloch, technology and science has freed man from the alienation that the work division has subjected him to. When consumed by labour, social inequalities and the anxieties of life, man is unable to take charge of his future. He is a prisoner of himself and by himself, and to escape he must succumb to modernization. By creating tools that can aid or even replace him in certain daily tasks, he will be able to free himself from the alienation of labour and all the economic and social constraints that come with it. It is in this spirit that Jonas, in his book entitled *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*, questions why we should stop the progress of technology and science since they benefit and fulfill a noble vision for humanity:

“Technology today has altered the very nature of human action by allowing us to affect nature, both outside ourselves and within, in ways that are long-range cumulative, irreversible, and planetary in scale. But traditional ethics has presumed that the effects of our actions are quite limited. With exception of medicine, *techne* was believed to be ethically neutral. Ethical significance belonged to relation between humans, not between us and nature.”³⁵

Jonas opposed the concrete utopia and Marxism Bloch’s project in order to prevent the progress of technology from destroying “nature” and compromising life on Earth.

³⁵ Hans, Jonas, and Vogel, Lawrence. *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1996. P. 5

Jonas agrees that technology and science promise a brighter future for the so-called advent of the true man. However, this advent of the true man entails profound consequences for human existence on Earth, since it also jeopardizes “nature”, which supports all life in its delicate ecosystem. In the concrete utopia and Marxism Bloch’s project, “nature” has no value in itself. It is only an instrument allowing man to attain his goals. However, nature’s resources can be endlessly exploited until they are exhausted. Disruption of ecological balance and natural laws could annihilate life on Earth. It is precisely because of these threats and risks, appearing in an implicit way in the concrete utopia and Marxism Bloch’s project, that Jonas unreservedly denounces and criticizes this deadly plot against the existence of the human race. This, too, is what Pommier attests in his book, *Hans Jonas et le principe de responsabilité*:

“Avec le développement de la technique, c’est à la fois la nature et l’homme qui se trouvent menacés, et ce, en un double sens. En premier lieu et au plan ontique, la nature doit subir le poids de l’exploitation humaine à un degré tel que son équilibre et son existence sont dangereusement remis en question. Le pouvoir prométhéen, démesurément agrandi par la technique moderne, fait de l’homme, en tant qu’il est l’agent d’une technique qu’il ne maîtrise pas, le fossoyeur à venir de la nature. Mais c’est aussi l’homme qui est menacé de destruction: en détruisant la condition même de sa venue à l’être et de son maintien dans l’être, il prend part au suicide de l’humanité. En compromettant les conditions de vie des générations à venir, il prépare sa disparition.”³⁶

Jonas recognizes the concrete utopia and Marxism Bloch’s project, similar to his “Responsibility Principle” which aims to also maintain the existence of human life on Earth. Unfortunately, Bloch, contrary to Jonas, did not take into account the importance

³⁶ Éric, Pommier. *Hans Jonas et le principe de responsabilité*. Presses universitaires de France, Paris, 2012. P. 17

of the safeguard of “nature” in his concrete utopia and Marxism project. Technology, despite its size and importance in the works of Bloch, is only a means for man to free himself from the servitude and the existing capitalist socio-economic system. And it is precisely this technology advocated by Bloch in his “Principle of Hope” that Jonas seeks to thwart and underscore. Jonas argues that such a concept leads to consequences so much more detrimental to humanity than to not allow man to discover his true “Being”. Despite this, Jonas clearly admits at the end of his book, *Principle of Responsibility, an Ethics for Technological Civilization*, that the main purpose of Bloch with his marxist utopia was to find solutions to the problem of hunger in the world when he refers to the term “reconstruction of the planet” cited by Bloch in his *Principle of Hope*:

“The three items around which extrapolations of needs and limits revolve are food, raw materials, and energy—and spread over all of the main the issue of environmental pollution.

Bloch, with his ‘reconstruction of the planet’, was mainly thinking of food production.”³⁷

Indeed, this fragment taken from his “Responsibility Principle” makes us understand that, despite his fierce opposition to the author of the “Principle of Hope”, Jonas is not entirely indifferent to the concern or intention of E. Bloch to find solutions for hunger, poverty and social injustice that continue to plague the world.

We have addressed Bloch’s “Principle of Hope” in order to understand why and how, according to Jonas, the progress of technology is really a threat to “nature” and humanity. We have shown the important role of the progress of technology in the “Principle of Hope”. According Bloch, the genuine man has not yet come. However, only with the progress of technology can man be able to free himself from all of the alienation

³⁷ Hans, Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. The University Press of Chicago. 1984. P. 189

that prevents him from enjoying life and knowing his authentic self. With the progress of technology, man is able to exploit and use “nature” in way that could cause the destruction of life on Earth. Jonas, with his purpose of preserving the existence of humanity on Earth, opposes the progress of technology, and therefore opposes the concrete utopia and Marxism of Bloch’s project.

I. 4 The “Responsibility Principle” of Hans Jonas

This new section will be devoted to a much deeper analysis of Hans Jonas's “Responsibility Principle”. In the first two sections we briefly covered the historicity of the ontological and ethical foundation of the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”. In the third and previous section, we discussed and clarified the position of Jonas regarding his “Responsibility Principle”, as well as the approach advocated by Bloch for his concrete and Marxist utopia in his “Principle of Hope”. Now we will further dissect the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” in the second part of this research. To do so, we will first address the new ecological imperative of the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”. Then, we will approach Jonas’s view of “nature”: its value and vulnerability. Finally, we will examine the two models of Jonassian responsibilities, those of parents and politicians.

I. 4. a) The ecological imperative of Hans Jonas

With this new subsection in our work, we will address the new Jonassian ecological imperative. Remember that in the second section of this endeavour, we approached Kant’s categorical imperative, which, according to him, would enable man to act not only on the basis of his reason but also according to universal norms and principles. This examination enabled us to understand that the categorical imperative has an anthropocentric character centered on the relations of man to man. With Jonas, it is no

longer the rationality of man or even universal norms that will be at the foundation of his new ecological imperative, but rather the feelings of man: feelings towards and for man's and nature's vulnerability and fragility. As Jonas mentions in his book entitled *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*:

"I contend that we need today an imaginative- anticipatory heuristic of fear to lead us to the discovery of the duties, even the ethical principles, with which to meet the challenge of coming events."³⁸

Among all of those feelings, fear plays a predominant role in the ecological imperative of Hans Jonas, since fear can urge man to protect what they love most and what they are most susceptible to lose. We refer here to "our lives," because there is nothing more precious or that we love more than our own lives. Everything man has been doing since his first breath has been to keep him alive. According to Jonas, the fear of causing the extinction of life on this planet will urge us to take responsibility. In the case of technology, Jonas calls for man to take responsibility against the progress of technology, which causes the degradation of "nature", in order to avoid a worse scenario for future generations. According to Jonas, it is not because of the atomic bomb that the progress of technology is a danger and a threat for "nature" and future generations, but precisely because of all the unpredictable decisions and actions that man is taking with respect to "nature". In his book entitled *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, Jonas clearly states the importance of "fear" in the human decision against the possible extermination of life on Earth:

"For many the apocalyptic potential of our technology is concentrated in the atom bomb. I am sure they do not exaggerate the peril. But it has one consolation: it lies in the realm of

³⁸ Hans, Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 73

arbitrary choice. Certain acts of certain actors can bring about the catastrophe—But they can also remain undone. Nuclear weapons can even be abolished without this requiring all of modern existence to change. (The prospect is admittedly small.) Anyway, decisions still play a role—and in these: fear.”³⁹

Following this new ecological imperative, man contains within him a sense of responsibility that prompts him to preserve life on Earth, a concept already discussed in the second section of this endeavour as the concept of a human Being’s “will,” based on the deontology of Kant. Indeed, the new ecological imperative of Jonas is a reformulation of the Kantian hypothetical imperative. With this new ecological imperative, Jonas proposes an imperative that allows man to act not only in terms of his well-being but also in terms of the well-being of “nature”. According to Jonas, man must protect “nature” in order to preserve the human species.

Since “nature” serves as a habitat for all living beings, it should be all the more safeguarded so that man can ensure the procreation of his species and the resources he needs to survive. Such effort to preserve the human species does not always seem clear with Jonas, since it is the authenticity of humanity that he values the most. In his own words, Jonas states: “An imperative responding to the new type of human action and addressed to the new type of agency that operates it might run thus: Act so that the effects of your actions are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life [...]”⁴⁰. Unfortunately, Jonas does not clarify what he means when he argues that it is the authenticity of humanity that should be preserved. In his book, entitled *The Imperative of*

³⁹ Hans, Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. The University Press of Chicago. 1984. P. 202

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*. P. 11

Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age, he tries to define the existence of humanity in a way that remains vague, unclear, and inadequate:

“‘Existence of a mankind’ means simply that there live men on earth; that they live well is the second commandment.”⁴¹

He simply mentions that the preservation of humanity means that man must live well. But how is man to “live well”? What does it mean to live well? This makes us reflect on the concrete and Marxist utopia of Bloch, discussed in the third section of our work. Although Jonas, with his ecological imperative that stipulates the existence of “genuine human life”, differs from Bloch, with his Concrete utopia that proposes the introduction of the true man, both of them have in fact the same purpose: maintaining the existence of humanity in the future. Is it not the same “living well” that Bloch mentions in the context of his Concrete utopia when he advocates for the advent of “the authentic man”. As highlighted in Jonas’s critique of Bloch’s “concrete utopia ”:

“All theories of an ‘authentic’ and ‘true’ man whom we are to await or create or make possible or even force into existence are only lead us to disaster. All such utopian dreams must be countered by the fact that ‘man’ has always been present with everything in him that should be avoided and all that cannot be surpassed.”⁴²

Despite some lack of clarification of his “ecological imperative”, Jonas still remains one of the few thinkers and philosophers of his time who showed concern for “nature” in ethical debates. He introduced a new concept in ethics which seeks to take care of not only of the relationship between man and “other Beings” similar to him, but also between man and “nature”. With this ecological imperative, Jonas made himself a

⁴¹ Hans, Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. The University Press of Chicago. 1984. P. 99

⁴² Hans, Jonas, and Vogel, Lawrence. *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1996. P. 105

pioneer in the struggle for the conservation of “nature” by seeing “nature”, not as a means to the service and the disposition of man, but rather an end in itself demanding respect and protection. This is what Arno Munster expresses quite clearly at the beginning of his book, entitled *Principe responsabilité ou principe espérance*:

“Elle évolue vers une anthropologie philosophie et vers l’esquisse d’une éthique nouvelle adaptée aux défis de la civilisation technologique, à savoir une éthique de la responsabilité, une éthique du futur, une éthique prévisionnelle des catastrophes écologiques à venir et une éthique pour la nature. Plaçant la question de la survie de l’humanité face au danger de la destruction de la planète au cœur de ses réflexions philosophiques.”⁴³

This excerpt implies a discontinuity in the conception of man’s relationship to “others”, where the relationship between man and the “other” was always considered a relationship between man and man. But for Hans Jonas, “other Beings” also meant “nature” in its global context.

With this new ecological imperative, Jonas incorporates “nature” as a new relationship with man. “Nature” will no longer be considered opposite to man, but rather among the “others” of man. According to Jonas, we can’t preserve the existence of humanity if we don’t first change our view of ethics towards nature.

I. 4. b) Hans Jonas and “nature” with its value and vulnerability

In the previous paragraph, we established differences between the Kantian categorical and hypothesis imperative and the ecological imperative. We also showed the importance and limitations of the latter. With the “ecological imperative”, Jonas sought to preserve the authenticity of humanity, which was one of the complexities that lacked clarity in Jonas’s “Responsibility Principle”. He proposed to us this new concept of ethics

⁴³ Arno, Munster. *Principe responsabilité ou principe espérance*. Ed. Le bord de L’eau 2010. P. 9

in which we consider the relationship between man and “nature”. This gives nature a new concept and importance for man. One fact is quite clear—if, for Bloch, “nature” was only a means placed at the disposal and in the service of man, for Jonas, it was quite the opposite. “Nature” finally seems to have a voice in Jonas’s ethical arguments, since, according to his arguments in his book titled *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, we can infer that “nature” is not only considered as a means to allow man to achieve his goals, but it also needs to be protected and respected in order to maintain the existence of man on Earth. Since “nature” has value in itself, it will no longer be exploited and used, as advocated in the concrete and marxist utopia of Bloch. To repeat the words of Munster at the beginning of his book, *Principe responsabilité ou principe espérance*:

“ L’homme, destructeur potentiel du travail téléologique de la nature, doit prendre en charge au niveau de son vouloir le oui que la nature adresse à l’être et le non qu’elle oppose au non-être. Nul ne peut plus dire : que l’homme soit, sans dire : que la nature soit. Voilà pourquoi le oui à l’être, que la vie prononce spontanément est devenu au niveau humain devoir-être, obligation. A ce propos Jonas se focalise sur deux formes majeures d’obligation, à savoir l’obligation des parents à l’égard de leurs enfants et l’obligation des hommes politiques.”⁴⁴

Munster makes us understand, as we have mentioned in the previous paragraphs of this endeavour, that we cannot preserve the existence of our species if we continue to exploit and damage nature.

“Nature” is our only “habitat”, until proof of the contrary, on which we are all dependent. We must do something to curb the threats and dangers to which “nature” is exposed. “Nature” has never been so vulnerable and disorganized as it is today, because

⁴⁴ Arno, Munster. *Principe responsabilité ou principe espérance*. Ed. Le bord de L’eau 2010. P. 15

of the excessive use on our part of technology and science. Not only have we overused and exploited nature due to our extensive use of technology and science, but we have also destabilized all the conditions that protect and ensure the existence of life on earth. These contemporary problems include: global warming; acid rain; water and food contamination; air pollution; and deforestation, among others. Greisch, in his own words, points out in the beginning of his French translation of Jonas's book, *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*:

“Encore fallait-il se rendre compte que cette nature elle-même, sous l'influence de la technique, n'est plus ce qu'elle était : elle est de moins en moins la grande puissance mythique sur laquelle l'homme n'a aucune prise et qui le renvoie inexorablement aux limites de son pouvoir. A partir du moment où le pouvoir technologique rend la nature elle-même manipulable et de plus en plus altérable à volonté, elle devient elle même un être fragile et menacé, presque sans défense, à l'instar de n'importe quel être humain et donc un objet de responsabilité.”⁴⁵

Jonas goes even further by denouncing the threat of the progress of technology to “nature”, and by trying to find some solutions, even though his solutions are not able to adequately suppress the unprecedented exploitation of “nature”. As a proposal, he invites us all to take personal responsibility for the maintenance of human life. In his view, it is through our own responsibility that we will be able to control and slow down the progress of technology: “the duty to preserve this physical world in such a state that the conditions for that presence remain intact; which in turn means protecting the world's vulnerability from what could imperil those very conditions.”⁴⁶ This will allow us to curb the dangers

⁴⁵ Hans, Jonas. *Le principe responsabilité, une éthique pour la civilisation technologique*. Trans. Jean Greisch, les éditions du cerf, Paris, 1990. P. 10-11

⁴⁶ Hans, Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. The University Press of Chicago. 1984. P. 10

and threats we expose “nature” to through technology, and hence, to ensure the survival and existence of our species on Earth.

With Jonas, we have traced the intrinsic value of “nature” and its vulnerability in order to highlight the reason why we have to take responsibility to safeguard it. First of all, we have found that “nature”, similar to any human being, also has an end in itself demanding respect and protection. Secondly, due to the overexploitation and use from science and technology, “nature” has started losing its organization that maintains life on earth. In order to curb this technological threat of “nature”, Jonas invites everyone to take responsibility for protecting “nature” in order to ensure the existence of the human species in the future.

I. 4. c) The responsibility models of Hans Jonas

Throughout this research we constantly evoke these two terms “Responsibility Principle” which are indeed two paradigmatic terms in Hans Jonas’s major work in the field of environmental ethics with his book entitled *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. We intend to turn to the two models of responsibility that Hans Jonas proposed in his “Responsibility Principle”. However, even before presenting these two models of responsibility, we must seek to understand the meaning he gives to the term of “responsibility”. In Jonas’s book *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, he explained the term of responsibility:

“At any rate, the starry-eyed ethics of perfectibility has to give way to the sterner one of responsibility. The latter is not devoid of hope, but gives also fear its rightful place. Its heart is veneration for the image of man, turning into trembling concern for its vulnerability.”⁴⁷

The vulnerability of “others” requires *ipso facto* a response from man in light of his capacity to act freely. For Jonas, it’s precisely the vulnerability of “others” that is the catalyst of his term “Responsibility”. According to him, man should feel responsible for “others”, for “nature”, because of nature’s vulnerability and inability to protect itself by itself.

As we have seen in the first section of this endeavour with the ontology of Heidegger, man as a “Being” can give sense and meaning to his life, his existence, only in his relation to the “other”. In his essence as a “Being”, which is founded on his openness and his relationship to “others”, according to Heidegger, man cannot give sense to his existence without “others”. Remember that, with Jonas, the term “others” does not only refer to man, but also to “nature” in a global sense. The difference between the Heideggerian and Jonassian concept of man is that Jonas’s concept gives meaning not only to his own existence with his relationship to “others,” but also to the existence of “others” with whom he has relations. We might better understand Jonas’s conception of the term “responsibility” in the following quote from Greisch in the preface of his French translation of Jonas’ *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*:

“Accepter d’être « prise en otage » par ce qu’il y a de plus fragile et de plus menacé. Que nous le voulions ou non, nous sommes les architectes de la société à venir, car il ne nous appartient déjà plus d’enrayer le progrès technologique, même si nous le voulions. Ce qui

⁴⁷ Hans, Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. The University Press of Chicago. 1984. P. 201

nous appartient en revanche, c'est la conscience que nous sommes dores et déjà pris en otage par cet avenir que nous faisons exister.”⁴⁸

It is in this perspective that Jonas proposes to us two different models of responsibility: Parents and Politicians. According to Jonas, these two figures are emblematic of our society. They also have three concepts in common including “totality”, “continuity” and “future”, which he considers to be the foundation of existence and well being of humanity. These three concepts are complete in that they encompass all aspects of their subjects: on one side, the children, for parental responsibility, and on the other side, the citizens with regards to the politician’s responsibility. These duties cannot be discontinued or stopped for no reason. As Jonas stated, “continuity” simply means that responsibilities of that kind (unlike limited ones) have no pause as long as they last and permit no “vacation” from their duties.⁴⁹ According to Jonas, the concept of “future” means that the responsibility of parents and politicians to their “subjects” is beyond the immediate present. The past is less important, since parents and politicians place more value on future goals and plans for their subjects, rather than the past experiences of their subjects. These three concepts “totality”, “continuity” and “future” are critical to Jonas’s concept of Responsibility due to their emphasis and their focus on man’s responsibility to man, as we can understand in Jonas’s words:

“What is common to them can be summed up in the three concepts of ‘totality’, ‘continuity’ and ‘future,’ referring to the existence and welfare of ‘human existence’. It has the precarious, vulnerable and revocable character, the peculiar mode of transience, of all life, which makes it alone a proper object of ‘caring’, and, moreover, it shares with the

⁴⁸ Hans, Jonas. *Le principe responsabilité, une éthique pour la civilisation technologique* ». Trans. Jean Greisch, les éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1990. P. 12

⁴⁹ Hans, Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 95

agent subject the *humanum*, which has the first, if not the sole, claim on him. Responsibility is first and foremost of men for men. This subject-object kinship in the relation of responsibility implies that the relation, though unilateral in itself and in every single case, is yet, on principle, reversible and includes possible reciprocity.”⁵⁰

However, despite their points of convergence, the two models of responsibility, Parent and Politician, remain contrary and even opposed, according to the nature of their objects. They are different, according to Jonas, due to multiple reasons. Firstly, according to Jonas, parental responsibility is to be for the rare prominent individual only, whereas the politician responsibility is (as a rule and for a time) to be everyone. Secondly, objects of the parental responsibility are the few, intimately related fruits of the parents’ own procreation, each counting in its singular identity, yet still unfinished; whereas object of the politician responsibility are the many, nameless, in themselves already finished members of the pre-existing society, who yet are ignored precisely in their individual identities [...]”⁵¹. Moreover, the parental responsibility it depends in no way on any prior consent, it is irrevocable, since it is given naturally to parents without any conventional law from humans, and this implicates that nothing can change this responsibility or take it away from the parents. The politician’s responsibility, on the other hand, is by nature a completely conventional responsibility; one which requires a choice, acceptance and approval of the citizen, in a pre-existing society, more specifically in a democratic nation. It is a self-chosen responsibility, as Jonas states in his book entitled *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*:

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*. P. 91

⁵¹ Hans, Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility, in Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. The University Press of Chicago. 1984. P. 97

“The paradigm case is the politician, who seeks power in order to gain responsibility, and supreme power for the sake of supreme responsibility. Power, to be sure, has its own lures and rewards- prestige, glamour, the enjoyment of authority, of commanding and initiating, the inscribing of one’s trace in the world, even the enjoyment of the mere consciousness of it (not to speak of the vulgar gain).”⁵²

According to Jonas, parental responsibility is the model of any responsibility because it takes care of a direct relationship of man to man: “the archetype of responsibility is the care of parent for child, where the goal of parenting is the perpetuation of the capacity for responsibility itself.”⁵³ Through this parental responsibility, Jonas makes us understand clearly that it not “nature” in its vulnerability that we have to take responsibility for, but rather the existence of humanity that is dependent on “nature”. Therefore, by extension, “nature” has to be protected and preserved as well.

We can agree with Jonas on some points that parents and politicians are undeniably two models of responsibility in our society. However, we are not entirely convinced that these models of responsibility are sufficiently relevant as solutions, or at least as paradigms, that will allow us to curb the threats and dangers to which we expose “nature”. The parental responsibility, different from the responsibility to future generations, is immediate and concrete, i.e. the parents and the children are not two individuals that are living in two different temporalities. They are two individuals living in the “*hinc et nunc*”, in the same timeline. For the politician’s responsibility, their objects are living in perfectly synchronized relationship with them. On the contrary, this

⁵² Hans, Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 89

⁵³ Hans, Jonas, and Vogel, Lawrence. *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1996. P. 15

responsibility for future generations, stipulated by Jonas in his “Responsibility Principle” refers to two different individuals living in a disproportional line of time who never have any relationship in the “*hic et nunc*”, despite the three aspects of totality, continuity and future of Jonas’s parental and politician’s responsibility models that we addressed previously in this subsection. This makes it somehow irrelevant for us to commit ourselves to taking responsibility if we are concerned only with the present moment and the present individual with whom we are in concrete and immediate relation.

We recognize that Hans Jonas was one of the first thinkers and philosophers who had the courage and the audacity to unveil in ethics the origins of the problem of environmental crisis in which we find ourselves today. However, Jonas has not really given us tangible and relevant solutions to these crises, apart from his new conception of ethics that embraces his ecological imperative, his renunciation of the concrete utopia and Marxism Bloch’s project and his two models of responsibility. As he admits in his book entitled *Memoirs*:

“I should add that not all the reactions to The Imperative of Responsibility were positive.

In retrospect, I would say that the political implications of my thinking – the renunciation of utopias as well as the skepticism toward democracy’s ability to meet the challenges of the future – were probably the most controversial.”⁵⁴

Furthermore, with his “Responsibility Principle”, it seems more obvious to us that Jonas, with his new stance on ethics, did not aim to protect “nature” for itself, but rather to protect “nature” in order to preserve the existence of humanity on Earth. We can better understand this by the following statement from Jonas’s book entitled *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*:

⁵⁴ Hans, Jonas, and Wiese, Christian. *Memoirs*. 1st ed.]. ed., Waltham, Mass.: Hanover, Brandeis University Press; Published by University Press of New England, 2008. P. 208

“In the choice between man and nature, as the struggle for existence poses it time and again, man of course comes first, and nature, even when allowing for her own rights, must give way to his superior right.”⁵⁵

We have scrutinized Jonas’s “Responsibility Principle” by addressing his ecological imperative, his concept of “nature” in its value and vulnerability and his two models of responsibility. With the ecological imperative of Jonas, we have shown the convergence and similarity between the Jonassian and Kantian imperatives; where Jonas, contrary to Kant, uses humans’ feelings instead of reason as the foundation of his ecological imperative. Through this ecological imperative, Jonas seeks to defend the obligation to maintain the existence of the human species in its authenticity. With the concept of “nature”, with its value and vulnerability, Jonas tries to prove to us why we have to protect and safeguard “nature”. According to him, “nature” has an end in itself, which demands protection, rights and respect. Jonas maintains that we have to take responsibility for curbing the progress of technology that constitutes to threaten “nature” and the existence of human life on earth. With the two models of responsibility, Jonas explains why we have to take responsibility for maintaining the existence of humanity on earth. Now we will further dissect the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” in order to comprehend its role and importance in our contemporary ecological debates.

⁵⁵ Hans, Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 66

Part II

II. Hans Jonas and contemporary debates in environmental ethics

We now begin the second part of our research by addressing these three contemporary philosophers and their approaches to environmental ethics: Ulrich Beck, Bryan Norton and J. Baird Callicott. We will try to show whether these philosophers were or were not influenced by Hans Jonas and his “Responsibility Principle”, in order to answer the question of our thesis, namely: What is the significance and impact of the “Responsibility Principle” in contemporary environmental debates? To do so, we will divide this second part of our research work into two sections. In the first section, we will examine Ulrich Beck and his “Principle of Precaution” in comparison to the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” in order to highlight the points of convergence or divergence between these two thinkers in their interpretations and solutions to environmental ethics. In the second section, we will contrast Bryan Norton with J. Baird Callicott according to their views on environmental values, in order to see what affect Jonas’s “Responsibility Principle” would have on these contemporary philosophers.

II. 1 Ulrich Beck and the “responsibility principle” of Hans Jonas

Ulrich Beck, a contemporary philosopher and fervent defender of nature’s protection from the technological threats of our current or post-modern society, unlike his predecessor Jonas, sees ecology not as a principle of responsibility but as a “Principle of Precaution”. His aim is to respond and cope with the deterioration of nature caused by the excessive use of the techno-scientific means and over-exploitation of nature. Beck believes that this “Principle of Precaution” responds much better to globalization and the magnitude of the risks and threats to life associated with modernization. In the first

chapter of his book, *La Société du Risque, sur la Voie d'une autre Modernité*, Beck expresses this concern the precautionary principle, in the following terms:

“Il n’est plus possible- comme c’était le cas des risques industriels et professionnels du XIXe et de la première moitié du XXe siècle - de cantonner ces risques à un espace ou à un lieu déterminé. On observe une tendance à la globalisation qui touche la production et la reproduction, et transcende les frontières des États-nations. On voit apparaître des menaces globales transnationales et non spécifiques à une classe déterminées, qui s’accompagnent d’une dynamique sociale et politique nouvelle.”⁵⁶

Beck questions the fact that, despite the scale and globalization of these threats, the institutions concerned do not seek to value the importance and the seriousness of the situation. On the contrary, in his opinion, these institutions seek instead to legally spread out these risks, resulting in effects on the daily consumption of the world’s population: in the water we drink, the air we breathe, the food we eat and the products we use. Beck examined this phenomenon in the first chapter of his book *La Société du risque, sur la voie d'une autre modernité* under the name of “latent induced effects”:

“Comment les risques et les menaces qui sont systématiquement produits au cours du processus de modernisation avancée peuvent-ils être supprimés, diminués, dramatisés, canalisés, et, dans le cas où ils ont pris la forme d’« effets induits latents », endigués et évacués de sorte qu’ils ne gênent pas le processus de modernisation ni ne franchissent les limites de ce qui est ” tolérable ”?”⁵⁷

For Beck, it is not only a question of safeguarding “nature”, of ensuring the survival of humanity, but of solving the underlying problems that lie at the root and foundation of all the degradation of humanity. This fragment from his book, entitled *La Société du risque*,

⁵⁶ Ulrich, Beck. *La Société du risque, sur la voie d'une autre modernité*, Paris, éd. Aubier, 1986, p. 26-27

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*. p. 36

sur la voie d'une autre modernité, can help us to better understand Beck's perspective on the risks associated with modernisation:

“Il ne s'agit donc plus ou plus uniquement de rentabiliser la nature, de libérer l'homme des contraintes traditionnelles, mais aussi et avant tout de résoudre des problèmes induits par le développement technico-économique lui-même. Le processus de modernisation devient “réflexif”, il est à lui-même objet de réflexion et problème.”⁵⁸

Beck, with his “Principle of Precaution”, directs ecology towards a paradigm much more relevant than that of Jonas. He addresses the problems of the environmental crisis in a much deeper and concrete way, by unveiling the cause of the technological risks by looking at the “latent induced effects” of the products of consumption and use. However, we do not see how Beck will apply his “Principle of Precaution” in institutions and in present society without awareness and responsibility among all the actors concerned, without a return to the constitutional laws and norms of our institutions and of our current society. The presence of these latent toxic substances in the food humans consume, in the pesticides humans use, in the air humans breathe, in the water that humans drink, is quite legitimate and lawful with respect to the geo-politico-economic laws of our institutions and society. As humans, we also demonstrate acceptance, tranquility, or perhaps a blinding, normal ignorance of the consumption and use of these toxic products that science and technology offers us.

We will need a “*tabula rasa*”, a starting point in the foundations and principles of the constitutions and laws of our institutions and of our present society in order to curb and possibly eradicate the presence of these “latent induced effects”, which, according to Beck, are at the root of the dangers and threats associated with modernization. Such a

⁵⁸ Ulrich, Beck. *La Société du risque, sur la voie d'une autre modernité*, Paris, éd. Aubier, 1986, p. 36

step backwards in the constitutional laws and norms of our institutions and our society would require a redefinition, a new conception of “nature” and of the environment. We will examine this in the next section of our research when we encounter and come to understand the work of ecologist Callicott and his concept of the “intrinsic value of nature”. Once we recognize the value of nature, its essential and indispensable role in the maintenance of life on earth, we will be able to solve the problems of the dangers and threats related to modernization.

Hans Jonas, with his “Responsibility Principle”, was one of the first philosophers of his time who sought to see ethics as a relation between Man and nature, raising the problems of the danger and the threat of technology and science to nature. In his opinion, these technological dangers and threats could lead to the disappearance of life on earth. To follow up on this Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” and to find a new solution to these technological risks, which beset nature, Beck seeks to categorize these risks and threats into two groups: the invisible and visible traits of technological risk.

II. 1. a) Ulrich Beck and the invisibility of technological threats

It is indeed against the invisible traits of technological risks that Beck seeks to defend the fate of “nature” and the human species in his “Principle of Precaution”. Additionally, he affirms that these risks are invisible, but that does not mean they are not real or that they don’t have long-term consequences for future generations. According to him, despite their invisibility, these risks sooner or later will destroy and annihilate the existence of human life on Earth. We do not see them, we do not feel them and we cannot touch them, but they are legitimately there in our food, in the air, in the water and in our agriculture fields in the form of “latent induced effects” by the complicity of science and

our institutions. In order to legitimize and legalize these toxic substances, Beck says our institutions insert them in our consumption and products according to a non-disturbing, acceptable, low percentage quantity known as the “limit rate”. This is done with the rationale that it will not cause harm or immediate effects on human life, even if this leads to deadly consequences for the future. Beck affirms this in his book, entitled *La Société du risque, sur la voie d’une autre modernité*:

“Les taux limites de présence « acceptable » de substances polluantes et toxique dans l’air, l’eau et l’alimentation sont à la répartition du risque ce qu’est le principe du mérite à l’inégale répartition des richesses: ils réussissent le tour de force d’autoriser les émissions polluantes tout en légitimant leur existence, tant qu’elle se cantonne en deça des valeurs établies. En limitant la pollution, on fait le jeu de la pollution.”⁵⁹

Furthermore, Beck tells us that the worst thing is that this “limit rate”, which science and our institutions legitimize and legalize in the products that we are consuming and using, is not always adhered to since they often exceed the “limit rate” on those products. For Beck, the correct and sensible solution would be to ban all toxic substances in consumption and use. Unfortunately, this solution has been rejected since it is impossible in its application. Even so, according to Beck and probably following Hans Jonas’s thinking, we must seek to apprehend these invisible risks that are gradually destroying nature and destroying the existence of life on earth, especially the existence of human life. To do so, Beck, in his book entitled *La Société du risque, sur la voie d’une autre modernité*, maintains that we have to appeal to science in order to have at our disposal tools and means capable of letting us detect and control these technological risks:

⁵⁹ Ulrich, Beck. *La Société du risque, sur la voie d’une autre modernité*, Paris, éd. Aubier, 1986, P. 116

“ Les risques qui sont actuellement au centre des préoccupations sont de plus en plus fréquemment des risques qui ne sont ni visibles ni tangibles pour les personnes qui y sont exposées, des risques qui parfois même restent sans effet du vivant des personnes concernées, mais en ont pour leur descendance, des risques en tout état de cause qui ont besoin du recours aux « organes de perception » de la science – théories, expérience, instruments de mesure – pour pouvoir devenir « visibles », interprétables en tant que risques .”⁶⁰

On the other hand, Beck and Jonas do not neglect or deny the dilemma between a total abandonment and the partial integration of these “latent induced effects” in our products of consumption and use. Giving up completely the integration of toxic substances in our products of consumption seems to be impossible due to the benefits these products offer. For example, sodium benzonate and potassium sorbate are common additives in food products used to preserve food longer so that it can stay on shelves and not expire quickly. Additionally, glyphosate and metolachlor are examples of common desiccants/herbicides used in agriculture to kill pests and unwanted weeds that may prevent or limit the growth of various crops. However, even accepting these chemicals in small quantities has heavy consequences for human life and its existence. According to Beck, the first option should be the lesser of two evils since it would not put any life in danger; however, that idea is found chimerical by many due to the necessity and importance of those “latent induced effects” in these products. While it is true that the end does not always justify the means, in this case “latent induced effects” from the small quantity of toxic substances are compelling and necessary to integrate in some of our products of consumption and use. This integration is necessary to reduce the rate of famine and make certain populations less dependent and more autonomous in regards to

⁶⁰ Ulrich, Beck. *La Société du risque, sur la voie d'une autre modernité*, Paris, éd. Aubier, 1986, p. 49

other rich countries. Nitrogen and ammonium nitrate, for example, are synthetic fertilizers that help farmers to grow their crops at a much larger size and shorter period of time. Beck tries to make us understand this in his book entitled *La Société du risque, sur la voie d'une autre modernité*, affirming that:

“Entre la menace visible de mourir de faim et la menace invisible d’une mort par intoxication, c’est l’évidence de la lutte contre la misère matérielle qui l’emporte. Sans l’utilisation massive de substances chimiques, les rendements des champs baisseraient et les insectes et les champignons engloutiraient une partie des récoltes. Avec la chimie, les pays pauvres de la périphérie peuvent couvrir leurs besoins alimentaires, ils gagnent un peu d’indépendance par rapport aux métropoles du pouvoir du monde industriel.”⁶¹

It is the reason why, according to Beck, scientists and some concerned institutions, such as the “FDA” (Food and Drug Administration) founded in 1906 in North America (USA), seek to justify and legalise these toxic substances that are consumed and used among the United States’ population.

In this subsection, Beck denounces the “latent induced effects” in the products of our consumption and use that are imperceptible but constitute the main risk and threat for “nature” and the existence of human life on earth. The chemicals found in these products are more dangerous because they apparently don’t represent any danger or risk in an immediate way, but over time latently destroy the very condition of human life on earth. We can see here a close similarity between the approach of both Jonas and Beck with respect to the interpretation they both have on the progress of technology.

⁶¹ Ulrich, Beck. *La Société du risque, sur la voie d'une autre modernité*. Paris, éd. Aubier, 1986, P. 76

II. 1. b) Ulrich Beck and the visibility of technological threats

Beck, with his “Principle of Precaution”, not only seeks to denounce the technological risks of invisible traits, but also aims to denounce the technological risks of visible traits that constitute a tangible and obvious part in the destruction and degradation of “nature”. With the denunciation of these visible risks, Beck clearly joins Jonas in his effort to fight against the technological threats that we expose “nature” to, which could eventually extinguish the human species. These technological risks with visible traits highlighted by these two thinkers concern all and every species on earth, since they are physically destroying “nature”, the one and only “Habitat” for the existence of life that we know so far (until proof of the contrary). According to Beck in his book entitled *La Société du risque, sur la voie d’une autre modernité*, they are obvious and tangible in the problems of deforestation, climate change, air pollution and water pollution:

“ La détérioration et la destruction de la nature n’ont plus lieu dans la sphère des chaînes de conséquences chimico-physico-biologiques soustraites à l’expérience personnelle, elles deviennent de plus en plus perceptibles pour la vue, l’odorat et l’ouïe. Nous n’évoquerons que les phénomènes les plus frappants: la détérioration galopante des forêts, la pollution des nappes phréatiques et des mers, la présence de cadavres d’animaux couverts de pétrole, le smog, l’érosion des bâtiments et des monuments artistiques par la pollution, des catastrophes, à quoi s’ajoutent les comptes-rendus des médias. La liste des substances toxiques et polluantes présentes dans l’alimentation et les objets de la vie quotidienne ne cesse de s’allonger. ”⁶²

Remember that J. B. Callicott in his distinction between ecologists, enumerated three categories of ecologists: the ecocentrists, the extensionists and all of those who see ecology as a kind of “applied ethics” by the fact that they are most focused on the socio-

⁶²Ulrich, Beck. *La Société du risque, sur la voie d’une autre modernité*, Paris, éd. Aubier, 1986, P. 99

political-economic problems linked to the environmental crisis of today. Among these three categories, we had considered Jonas to belong to the third, i.e. as an environmental theorist who sees ecology as a type of applied ethics, recognizing that the problem of this environmental crisis is rooted in the progress of technology. As we know, technology is also one of the socio-political-economic problems of said environmental crisis. Beck, according to his interpretation of environmental ethics, could also be considered in this category of ecologists who sees ecology as a type of applied ethics, since he, as well as Jonas, finds the problem of this environmental crisis in technology. In his book “Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk”, Ecology, as a movement, is not an environmental movement but rather a social movement, since it aims far from seeking to defend nature against the risks of techno-science, but to ensure and preserve the existence of humanity on earth:

“The ecological movement is not an environmental movement but a social, inward movement which utilizes ‘nature’ as a parameter for certain questions. These owe the attention accorded them to every one’s growing horror at the fact that what it had been supposed we could foresee has taken root in a foreseeably unforeseeable jeopardization, not only of nature, but also of leisure, recreation, health, life, capital, property, performance.”⁶³

With Beck, we have addressed in this subsection the impacts of the visible and invisible technological threats on the degradation of “nature” and the destruction of life on earth. It is now fairly obvious for us to see a correlation between the “Principle of Precaution” and the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”. As in Jonas’s “Responsibility Principle”, Beck’s “Principle of Precaution” also aims to slow down the progress of technology that implicitly degrades and destroys nature and the existence of the human

⁶³ Ulrich, Beck. *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk*. Cambridge Malden, MA: Polity, 2002. P. 55

species on earth. It is true that Jonas and Beck take a different approach to coping with these technological threats; however, they both in fact see in technology the foundation of the environmental crisis that we are facing today, which enables us to confirm that Jonas's "Responsibility Principle" has a coherent filiation with Beck's "Principle of Precaution". As Hicham-Stéphane Afeissa, philosophy professor at the Academie de Dijon, mentioned in her work entitled *De l'éthique environnementale au principe responsabilité et retour*:

"Il vaut d'être remarqué que le diagnostic Jonassien est étonnamment proche de celui qu'avance Ulrich Beck au sujet de la désormais fameuse " société du risqué" (Beck, 2001). En effet, lui aussi estime que nous sommes entrés de plain-pied dans une nouvelle forme de société caractérisée par les implications imprévisibles de nos interventions technologiques dans la nature à l'échelle mondiale."⁶⁴

II. 2 B. Norton and J. B. Callicott and the "Responsibility Principle" of H. Jonas

It is important to understand that in North America, ethics were concerned only with the activities and relationships between humans. "Nature" was considered a means to the disposition and the needs of human beings. Eager to promote the cause of nature, Aldo Leopold, with his book entitled "*A Sand County Almanac*" published in 1949, sought to change and redefine anthropocentric ethics in order to give "nature" a place and a value equal to humans:

"Selon Léopold, l'éthique a jusqu'à présent concerné exclusivement les relations internes aux communautés humaines. Nous avons désormais besoin d'une nouvelle éthique, affirme t'il

⁶⁴ Afeissa, Hicham-Stéphane. "*De l'éthique environnementale au principe responsabilité et retour*". http://www.revue-ere.uqam.ca/PDF/volumen8/V8_02_Afeissa.pdf. P. 19

dans les années 1940, chargée de définir la relation de l'homme à la terre (land), aux animaux et aux plantes qui vivent dessus.”⁶⁵

According to Aldo Leopold, “ethics” do not only come to embrace the relationship between humans and humans, but also the relationship between humans and “nature”. This has since changed the concept of the value of “nature” in many ecological debates in North America. Similarly to Jonas, “Leopold seeks to defend ‘nature’ and human existence against the progress of technology”⁶⁶ through his work. We can better understand Leopold’s position to science and technology in his book entitled *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays* when he questions whether or not all inventions and technological progress will compromise the existence of life on earth:

“We of the machine age admire ourselves for our mechanical ingenuity; we harness cars to the solar energy impounded in carboniferous forests; we fly in mechanical birds; we make the ether carry our words even our pictures. But are these not in one sense mere parlor tricks compared with our utter ineptitude in keeping land fit to live on?”⁶⁷

In this final section of our endeavour, we will address these two contemporary environmentalist philosophers, Bryan Norton and J. Baird Callicott, and their opposition to the concept of the value of nature, despite the fact they both have the foundation of their ecological view in the same thinker: Aldo Leopold. If for Hans Jonas in his “Responsibility Principle”, “nature” was considered not only as an instrument for humans

⁶⁵ J. Baird, Callicott. *Ethique de la terre*, Wild Project, 2010, p. 13

⁶⁶ Many theorists have been concerned about modern technology’s power to radically change the planet and even perhaps destroy humans; Leopold was among them. Particularly given human hubris and lack of moral consciousness toward our treatment of the land, he was concerned about the potential destructive effects of modern science and technology. Volume 1, Issue: 3, Article 5, 2014. McGregor Joan. “*Enhancing Humans and Sustainability: The Reunion of Bioethics and Environmental Ethics*”: 10.3384/de-ethica.2001-8819.141335

⁶⁷ Aldo, Leopold. *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays*. Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1991. P. 184

but also an end in itself, deserving respect, rights and protection, with these two ecologists the concept of nature will create a significant divergence in their effort to find a solution to the environmental crisis we are in today. On one hand, we have Bryan Norton, who with his pragmatist view of environmental ethics seeks to find the solution to the environmental crisis in the value of nature in an extrinsic way. On the other hand, we have J. Baird Callicott, who with his ecocentrist view of environmental ethics seeks instead to find the solution to the environmental crisis in the value of “nature” in an intrinsic way.

II. 2. a) Hans Jonas and the pragmatism of Bryan Norton

Bryan Norton, in contrast to Jonas, doesn't seek to find the solution of the environmental crisis in a non-anthropocentric concept of environmental values. In Norton's view, only with “Pragmatism” will man be able to maintain his existence on earth, by conferring to “nature” an extrinsic value. According to him, practical experience and a language more adapted and appropriate to ecology will enable us to eradicate the dangers and threats that nature and the existence of human life face today. Norton affirmed that the major dilemma that “Ecology” suffers with the environmental values is based on the monistic and universal theory of values with the “Economism”⁶⁸ and “Intrinsic Value theory”⁶⁹. According to Norton, ecology is powerless to solve the

⁶⁸ “Economism” can be defined very briefly as the theory that all environmental value is one kind of consumer value among other consumer values, to be compared and balanced against other purchase that might be made with the consumers' presumably limited economic resources. Norton, Bryan G. *Sustainability: A Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management*, University of Chicago Press, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pccol/detail.action?DocID=625215>. Created from pccol on 2017-12-02 14:57:47.

⁶⁹ The theory that environmental values are to be understood as values intrinsic to nature itself— values that exist independently of human values— represents an alternative theory of competing dominance, capable of informing the answers to the remaining three questions and rivaling Economism for its generality and power. Norton, Bryan G. *Sustainability: A Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management*, University of Chicago Press, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central,

problems and dangers that “nature” and human existence face today, because it does not have an adequate language to discuss these dangers and problems in each of our community. As he states it in his book entitled *Sustainability, A Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management*:

“Pragmatists aspire to an ideal of a unified conception of inquiry in which philosophers are one kind of workers in a larger enterprise. Pragmatists seek a unified method of inquiry – a method that is self-correcting, based in experience, but also involving interpretation and theory- building.”⁷⁰

According to Norton, all of the failures we face today with the environmental crisis are due to the fact that we do not seek to solve the environmental issues from a more pluralist and local point of view, alongside of a language that’s well adapted to the environmental issues in each of our communities. In Norton’s view, because of the dichotomy existing between intrinsic value and instrumental value of “nature”, the bipolar formulation of environmental valuation, the monistic theories of values and the placeless or universal theories of values, it is difficult and even impossible with the Economists and Intrinsic Value theorists to incorporate environmental science and environmental values into pertinent and authentic debates that would lead us to new formulations of laws and principles for the protection and respect of “nature”. Additionally, according to Norton, the language we use now focuses all environmental ethics debates on environmentalist ideologies, which do not offer any practical solutions to the problems we are facing today. This affirmation from his book entitled,

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pccol/detail.action? DocID=625215>. Created from pccol on 2017-12-02 14:57:47.

⁷⁰ Bryan G., Norton. *Sustainability, A Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management*. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago. 2005, p. 49

“Sustainability, A Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management” can help us better understand his concern about the lack of language in environmental ethics:

“What is even more interesting is that these shared assumptions about the nature of environmental values are all questionable if individually and separately and also questionable taken together, as a general understanding of what we need in the way of a theory of environmental value. The advocates of these theories understand the problem of environmental valuation as a problem of classifying entities as either instrumentally or intrinsically valuable on the very general, ontological scale; they then seek to maximize a very abstract and placeless value, a value that derives none of its efficacy from the distinctiveness and unique charms of a place. Indeed, it is these four-shared assumptions about how to value the environment that create the tendency toward polarization in environmental ethics and environmental policy discussions, and toward ideological environmentalism more generally.”⁷¹

Here, we challenge the pragmatic view on environmental ethics of Norton to determine if it provides sufficient solutions to solve environmental crises. Even if man uses language to communicate, interact, and exchange ideas with one another, this does not mean, in any sense, that language alone can motivate in man an awareness of and responsibility toward the problem of the deterioration and destruction of “nature”. Norton advocates for a practical experience that remains too vague for us to understand, since it does not take into account the conditions of the people concerned. The experience is certainly necessary, but what kind of experience does Norton want to share with us? Is it the experience of the farmer in a third world country who cultivates his crops in order to provide only for his family, without any tools and/or chemical fertilizers used in the

⁷¹ Bryan G., Norton. *Sustainability: A Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management*, University of Chicago Press, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/pccol/detail.action?DocID=625215>. Created from pccol on 2017-12-02 16:25:44.

production of his food? Or is it the experience of the farmer in a developed country who has all of the tools and chemical products/fertilizers at his disposal, which allow him to grow tons and tons of crops?

It is difficult to determine the relative importance of language and experience that Norton praises in his pragmatic approach to environmental ethics, which is justified by several reasons. First of all, such language will in no way help us to act responsibly to protect “nature” and preserve the existence of human life on Earth, since his pragmatic approach does not take into consideration the differences in opportunity and education level of each individual in the society in question. The environmental crisis we are facing today cannot only be solved with the pluralistic and local point of view of Norton’s pragmatism, since it is not only a local problem, but also rather a transnational issue. Every nation has to be involved in solving these many issues of the environmental crisis we are facing today, by creating some universal and durable laws and principles to protect the environment.

Additionally, this new pragmatic interpretation of environmental ethics does not remain without criticism from other ecologists of the contemporary era, especially Callicott. According to the latter, such a conception of ethics, founded on anthropocentrism, would do much more harm than benefit to “nature” and the preservation of the human species on Earth. This is what Jonas, from his point of view of ethics, would also assert. Moreover, it was against this anthropocentric conception of the ethics of his time that Jonas was able to create his “Responsibility Principle”, aiming to counteract and contradict certain philosophical thinkers, especially the philosopher Bloch, as we have already discussed in the third section of the first part of our research.

Norton does not hide his adversity or opposition to the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”. In fact, he asserts his opposition implicitly in his book, entitled *Sustainability, A Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management*, when he affirms that true pragmatism must be based on experience alone and not on forms of preconceived principle, theory or paradigm:

“Real pragmatism stands for the direct opposite of what he calls traditional pragmatism. Real pragmatism stands for acting, for experimentation – for relying on experience, not on preconceived principle.”⁷²

In addition to this implicit attack on the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”, Norton also directly and openly attacks Callicott by criticizing him for denying or doubting that Aldo Leopold also had links and relationships with at least one of the founders of the current pragmatism, namely Arthur Twining Hadley. In Norton’s opinion, experience is the only way we, as human beings, can learn the truth about the future of everything on Earth. He also made clear in his book, “*Sustainability, a Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management*”:

“J. Baird Callicott, who has publicly doubted that Leopold has pragmatist leanings, has also publicly ridiculed the idea that Leopold relied on the work of Hadley, arguing that the use of the pragmatic definition was ‘ironically’ intended.”⁷³

Despite his fervent defense of such a pragmatic approach toward the ecology of Aldo Leopold, Norton has not proven clearly the links of the latter with Arthur Twining Hadley, the pioneer and founder of “pragmatism”. Norton simply mentions that Aldo Leopold has extracted the key ideas of his so-called pragmatic ecological view from the

⁷² Bryan G. Norton. *Sustainability, a Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management*. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago. 2005, p. 85

⁷³ *Ibidem*. p. 66

ecology of Arthur Twining Hadley, without really explaining in a clear and detailed way these links between Aldo Leopold and Arthur T. Hadley, while the latter was president of Yale University:

“Leopold’s most direct contact with pragmatists, as far as we know, was with Arthur Twining Hadley, who was president of Yale University when Leopold studied science, and then forestry, there from 1905 to 1909.”⁷⁴

In this subsection, we have shown the divergence that exists in Jonas’s work and Norton’s pragmatic view on environmental ethics. Contrarily to Jonas, Norton seeks to solve the problems of the environmental crisis in a pragmatic way, where only practical experience and a more adaptive language could curd all of the danger and threats that “nature” is exposed to. Thus, we can confirm that the “Responsibility Principle” of Jonas did not have any real significance or impact on Norton’s pragmatic view on ethics.

II. 2. b) Hans Jonas and the ecocentrism of J. Baird Callicott

With J. B. Callicott, the ecology movement takes again a different approach. According to him, the root of all the dangers and threats facing “nature” today is related to the extrinsic value that man grants to “nature”. In Callicott’s opinion, we are not going to be able to solve the problem of the dangers and threats linked to modernization which “nature” is facing today, if we do not at first try to see “nature” not as a means but as an “end” in itself, an end in itself that deserves respect, rights and dignity in the same way as the human species. He goes on to maintain that nature is not “the other” of the human species; quite the contrary, man is an integral part of “nature”. If man has a value in himself, dignity and rights, it is one more reason why “nature” also has value in itself,

⁷⁴ Bryan G. Norton. *Sustainability, a Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management*. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago. 2005, p. 65

dignity and rights. Since man is not an entity placed outside of “nature”, he is part of “nature” and depends on “nature.” According to Callicott, we should not even talk about environmental ethics if nature didn’t have an intrinsic value, an end in itself:

“Si la valeur intrinsèque fait défaut à la nature, alors l’éthique environnementale n’est en effet rien d’autre qu’une application particulière de l’éthique qui règle les relations entre les hommes. Pour dire la même chose autrement, si la valeur intrinsèque fait défaut à la nature, alors toute éthique environnementale non anthropocentriste est disqualifiée.”⁷⁵

Considering nature as an end in itself, which demands respect, dignity and the same rights as human beings, this could also lead to other conceptual challenges that are much more complicated and difficult to solve. Of course, it will not be a problem of the same significance as the ecological crisis, that would cause more risks and threats to “nature” and the existence of life on Earth; rather, it will be a problem that would require a total reformulation of the judicial, political, economic and social laws of all countries in the world. This implies that it’s not only a matter of awareness and individual or collective responsibility, but also a geo-politico-economic-social affair of all the countries of the world. All these countries should change their constitutions and laws with a view to regulating and legitimizing nature in its enjoyment of all the rights and respects it demands as an end in itself.

Despite the limitations and weaknesses of this ecological approach, it could remain among the ecological approaches with which we have already dealt with in the preceding section of this endeavour, one of the most relevant and adapted approaches to the ecological crisis of our era, in the sense that it seeks to eradicate in a definitive and general manner the foundation of all the dangers and threats of which “nature” is the

⁷⁵ J. Baird, Callicott. *Ethique de la terre*, Wild Project, 2010, p. 112

object. It encompasses all the nations of the world to review their legal and constitutional laws in order to give “nature” its real and authentic value, a value that is neither superior nor inferior to that which has been attributed to the human species. This approach goes beyond the responsibility of the individual. Far from encouraging man to save “nature”, as well as human existence, it requires the respect of nature’s rights: right of existence, right to be protected, etc. Hence it can be said that the responsibility of the person is governed here not by fear, as Jonas would have us believe, but rather by well-established laws for the protection and dignity of “nature”.

In addition to being one of the most relevant approaches to the problem of the environmental crisis, the ecological view of Callicott is also one of the contemporary approaches of environmental ethics that has in his foundation and his notions the same concept of “nature” defended by Jonas in his “Responsibility Principle”. Callicott also believes that a reformulation of ethics towards a relationship not only between humans to humans, but also between humans to “nature” is necessary in order to solve the problems of this environmental crisis.

II. 2. c) Hans Jonas and the value of “nature” with B. Norton and J. Baird Callicott

I was fortunate to participate in a debate session with Callicott under the title “Convergence and divergence between Animal and Environmental Ethics”, hosted by “*Centre de Recherche en Éthique– CRÉ*” in Montreal, Quebec in May 2017. During this debate, we were able to ask him directly a few questions about the notion of intrinsic value that he attributes to nature in his interpretation of Aldo Leopold’s “Land Ethic”. It was during this debate that we finally apprehended the meaning of Callicott’s concept of ecology, and saw the similarity that existed between the foundations of Callicott’s

ecocentrism with the “Responsibility Principle” of Jonas. In his interpretation of the “Land Ethic” of Aldo Leopold, Callicott never denied the extrinsic value of “nature”, as Norton wanted us to understand. Callicott was only emphasizing that we have to protect and conserve “nature” in its integrity, stability and beauty. As he stated very clearly during the debates by citing Aldo Leopold: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community, it is wrong when it tends otherwise—the “golden rule” of the Leopold Land Ethic.” It is precisely this “golden rule” of Aldo Leopold’s “Land Ethic”, interpreted by Callicott, that ecologically allows us to see a similarity between the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” and Callicott’s ecocentrism.

To justify and support his point, Callicott traced an analogy between man and “nature”, by explaining how man, despite the fact that he has an official intrinsic value, has been exploited and used as instrumental means in the workplace. Callicott shows us that even if the intrinsic value of “nature” was officially recognized by all, this would not have stopped man from exploiting and using “nature” as instrumental means. As Callicott states in his book entitled “Land ethics”:

“Les êtres humains, auxquels nous conférons une valeur intrinsèque, n’en sont pas moins appelés, dans le contexte professionnel, « ressources humaines ». Bien que nous autres employés soyons reconnus comme des fins, nous n’en sommes pas moins utilisés aussi comme moyens , en vues des fins de nos employeurs. C’est pourquoi, dans les sociétés qui reconnaissent les droits de l’homme, des contraintes éthiques et légales tâchent de limiter l’exploitation des êtres humains. Si la valeur intrinsèque de la nature était officiellement

reconnue, on continuerait d'exploiter la nature, mais de semblables contraintes seraient mises en œuvre pour limiter cette exploitation.”⁷⁶

This quote can help us understand that, for Callicott, “nature” has an unofficial intrinsic value. However, he does not believe that this intrinsic value would be compelling enough to safeguard and protect “nature” if there are no rules or laws that prevent man from overexploiting and using “nature”.

The ecocentrism of Callicott seems to have a deeper filiation with the Jonassian concept of the value of “nature”. On the one hand, Jonas seeks to oppose the advancement of technology, since it creates and engenders the over-exploitation and destabilization of nature’s order, on which the existence of humanity is dependent. On the other hand, we have Callicott, who, according to Aldo Leopold’s “Land Ethic”, seeks to defend the integrity, stability and beauty of “nature” for itself in order to preserve nature’s order and the existence of life on Earth. We can see here that both the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” and the ecocentrism of Callicott aim to defend the existence of human life on earth. Callicott’s assertion is better understood according to his interpretation of Aldo Leopold’s “Land Ethic”:

“So any assertion of responsibility of our generation for impacts on future people rests on these two assumptions: that our choices have important impacts on future people and the choices they face, and that our scientific knowledge is sufficiently reliable that we can foresee and plan to avoid negative impacts and encourage benign ones.”⁷⁷

We can realize that, at the end, both Jonas and Callicott have the same goal by taking different paths and finding different solutions to reach it. With either the opposition to the

⁷⁶ J. Baird, Callicott. *Ethique de la terre*. Wild Project, 2010, p 39

⁷⁷ *Idem*. p. 100

progress of technology or the defense of integrity, stability and beauty of “nature”, the ultimate goal is to preserve life on Earth.

This goal is also not opposed to that of Norton; his vision of pragmatic or anthropocentric ecology also has the good intention of emancipating life on Earth, specifically human life. Norton simply takes a path that is opposite to that of Jonas and Callicott, a path that, instead of curbing the over-exploitation of nature or guaranteeing the stability and integrity of “nature”, merely permits more exploitation and destabilization of the order of things in “nature” to achieve. Additionally, according to Norton, “nature” has no intrinsic value, as he believes it is simply an instrument in the service and at the disposal of human beings. This is precisely one of Callicott’s most explicit criticisms of Norton in his interpretation of Aldo Leopold’s “Land Ethic”:

“ N’en déplaie à mon confrère Bryan Norton, la question de la « valeur intrinsèque » ou de la valeur en soi de la nature a été et demeure une pierre de touche centrale pour la philosophie de l’écologie...Les anthropocentristes, comme Norton et Hagrove, ont refusé de considérer que la nature a une valeur en elle même, réservant une telle « valeur intrinsèque » aux seuls êtres humains. Les non-anthropocentristes, c’est- à-dire les autres, sont d’accord pour dire que la nature a une valeur intrinsèque, mais divergent pour ce qui concerne l’étendu de cette extension morale, et son statut ontologique. Certains prétendent que seuls des organismes individuels peuvent avoir une valeur intrinsèque; d’autres (dont je suis) considèrent que des « super organismes » comme des espèces, des communautés biotiques, des écosystèmes, la biosphère tout entière ont aussi une valeur intrinsèque.”⁷⁸

According to Callicott, Norton does not admit any difference between anthropocentric environmental ethics and non-anthropocentric environmental ethics, since for him

⁷⁸ J. Baird, Callicott. *Ethique de la terre*, Wild Project, 2010, p. 39

“nature” is treated the same way in either ethical framework; the ultimate goal is the conservation of life on earth, especially human life.

Let us return again to the resemblance and similarity existing between the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” and the ecocentrism of Callicott. It is not only at the level of the ecological foundation of Leopold’s “Land Ethic” that there is similarity between Callicott and Jonas, but there may also be a very close connection between the evolutionary basis of Leopold’s “Land Ethic” and the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”, according to Callicott. Remember that in the second section of the first part of our endeavour, we brought out the ontological foundation of the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” by approaching Kant with his hypothetical imperative. This “Kantian hypothetical imperative” reformulated by Jonas in the fourth section of this work under the title “New Ecological Imperative”. Jonas, unlike Kant, based his ideas not on rational “Beings” and not on Principles or norms, but rather on the feelings of man, specifically the feeling of fear known to Jonas under the title of the “heuristic of fear”. With Callicott, we will also see this touch of human feeling in the evolutionary foundation of said “Land Ethic” of Leopold; since, according to Callicott’s affirmation during the May, 2017 Montreal CRÉ debate, this evolutionary foundation of Leopold’s “Land Ethic” borrowed from Charles Darwin’s “Descent of Man”, which itself was founded on the sentimental morality of David Hume. In the words of Hume, Callicott states:

“According to Hume, the wellspring of all action, including ethical action, is feeling, emotion, passion – affect, not reason. Reason plays a subordinate but vital role in Hume’s moral philosophy.”

We do not have sufficient evidence or support to confirm this assertion by Callicott of the basis of Leopold's foundation for his "Land Ethic", apart from Callicott's statement in the May, 2017 Montreal CRÉ debate. This limited evidence forces us to have some reservations about this hypothesis; we do not want this hypothesis to lend confusion to the main focus of our research.

The relevant facts that we can use to justify the convergence existing between these two environmental theorists are: to safeguard "nature" and maintain the existence of future generations, we need to change our traditional view of ethics for a new ethics that doesn't only embrace the relationship between man and man, but also the relationship between man and "nature". In this new ethical view, according to these two environmental theorists, we will not only confer an extrinsic value to "nature" but we will also be able to see "nature" as having an intrinsic value that deserves dignity, rights and respect.

However, Jonas does not believe that referring to "nature" only with an intrinsic value would solve the environmental crisis we are facing today. As Lawrence mentions in Jonas's work entitled *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*:

"While many environmentalists presume that nonanthropocentrism must be a defining feature of any ecological ethics, Jonas does not believe that overcoming nihilism requires a renunciation of anthropocentrism in favor of biocentrism or ecocentrism. Instead, I shall contend, he tries to undercut the very distinction between anthropocentrism and its supposed alternative."⁷⁹

Jonas believes that it is not the progress of technology in general that threatens the existence of future generations, but rather the invention and the use of nuclear

⁷⁹ Hans, Jonas, and Vogel, Lawrence. *Mortality and Morality: a Search for Good after Auschwitz*. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1996. P. 6

bombs. According to Jonas, we do not necessarily have to change the existence of all of the technological progress in order to ensure the existence of future generations on earth. Alternatively, we just need to make good and adequate decisions that can banish the use and the existence of nuclear weapons, in fear that they will be responsible for destroying the planet. As Jonas affirms in his work entitled *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*:

“Nuclear weapons can even be abolished without this requiring all of modern existence to change. (The prospect is admittedly small.) Anyway, decisions still play a role – and in these: fear.”⁸⁰

In this second part of work, we addressed the works of three contemporary philosophers in the field of environmental ethics in order to answer our questions about the importance of and impact on Jonas's “Responsibility Principle” in contemporary philosophical debates. We have shown the similarities and differences existing between the “Principle of Precaution” of Beck and the “Responsibility Principle” of Jonas, as well as Norton’s pragmatic view on ethics compared to that of Jonas, and finally the ecocentrism of Callicott compared to Jonas. According to what was already discussed in the second part of this work, we can answer the question of this thesis by confirming that Jonas's “Responsibility Principle” has a coherent filiation in light of the philosophical debates of Beck and Callicott; however, it is opposed by the philosophical view and environmental debate of Norton.

⁸⁰ Hans, Jonas, and Institute for Antiquity Christianity. *On Faith, Reason and Responsibility*. Claremont, Calif., Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1981. P. 78

Conclusion

We were able to address briefly and precisely the elements that were deemed necessary and essential to achieve our objective, which was indeed to show the importance and the impact of the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” debates on the environmental ethics of our present era.

In the first part of this work, we have approached the philosophers Heidegger, Kant, Bloch and Jonas, the author of principal import to this endeavour. With Heidegger, in the first section of this work, we have highlighted the ontological basis of the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”, showing that humanity is formed by two correlational entities: his ability of openness and relationship with “Others”. From these two correlational entities, man is able to open up to himself and relate himself to “others” (in our case to “nature”) in order to maintain his existence in the world. In the second section of this work, we have highlighted with Kant the ethical foundation of the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”. It was on the basis of the Kantian hypothetical imperative that Jonas was able to bring to light his “new ecological imperative”, stipulating the obligation of man to preserve the existence of humanity in its authenticity. However, this new “ecological imperative” was also in complete opposition to that of Kant, since it was not founded on the rationality of man nor any longer on universal principles and norms, as Kant understood it in his “Categorical Imperative”. It is rather the feeling of fear that was at the center of the Jonassian “new ecological imperative”, conceptualized as the “heuristic of fear” in his “Responsibility Principle”. In the third section, we approached Bloch with his “Principle of Hope” in order to show Jonas’s position in contrast to the Concrete utopia and Bloch’s Marxist project, which is indeed an apology for the

advancement of technology. We have shown that Jonas sought the opposite to the progress of the technology, since, in his view, the progress of the technology is the cause of the degradation of “nature” and also the cause of a possible annihilation of the existence of life on Earth, especially human life. Hence the purpose of Jonas’s new ecological imperative is that man has an obligation to protect nature in order to guarantee the existence of the human species on earth as nature is threatened by the progress of science and technology. In the fourth section of our work we have tried to scrutinize the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” so that we can understand and discover what its importance and impact are in the debates of contemporary environmental ethics.

In the second part of this endeavour, we have approached respectively these three contemporary philosophers: Ulrich Beck, Bryan Norton and J. Baird Callicott, in order to examine the importance and impact of the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” in the debates of contemporary environmental ethics. With Beck, we have highlighted, in the first section of this second part of our work, the convergence and divergence between the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle” and the “Principle of Precaution” of Beck. As a convergence, we have shown that Jonas, like Beck, regards technological progress as a risk, a threat to “nature”, which could lead not only to the destruction of “nature” but also to the annihilation of human life on Earth. As a point of divergence, we have shown that Beck does not seek to find a solution to the technological risk in an ecological imperative or in an individual responsibility as Jonas does. Rather, Beck seeks a complete eradication of the “latent induced effects”, which are for him the basis of all of risk and danger to which we are exposing “nature” and the existence of human life.

In the last two sections of the second part of this work, we have examined the works of two contemporary environmentalist philosophers, Bryan Norton and J. Baird Callicott, in order to highlight the similarities and differences between them and Hans Jonas, with his “Responsibility Principle”. Norton and Callicott both draw the foundation of their concept of ecology from the work of Aldo Leopold. Moreover, their interpretation of the concept of the value of nature has put them in opposition to each other. For Norton, “nature” is only an instrument at the service and at the disposal of man. We have shown that Norton’s pragmatic approach is quite opposed to Callicott and Jonas, since “nature” for these latter two not only has an extrinsic value but also an intrinsic value. Callicott, as one of the philosophers most faithful to the work of Aldo Leopold and his view on the intrinsic value of “nature”, becomes one of the contemporary ecologists that could be more influenced by and allied with the Jonassian “Responsibility Principle”. This can be argued even though Callicott has never made any direct reference or use any quotation of Jonas and his “Responsibility Principle” in Callicott’s interpretation of Aldo Leopold’s “Land Ethic”.

It is true that Beck, by attacking the progress of technology, also demonstrated a more concrete relationship to Jonas’s “Responsibility Principle”; however, the solution that Beck brought forward is quite different from the new interpretation of Jonassian ethics. The Jonassian view is indeed to see in ethics not only as a relationship between human and human, but also as a relationship between human and nature, where “nature” will not be considered as only an instrument but also as an end in itself. Hence, we will be able to curb the progress of technology that is destroying “nature”, which could cause the extinction of the human species. The best way we can create this relationship with

“nature” is by taking responsibility for all of our actions toward “nature”, by recognizing its vulnerability and fragility, and by protecting and respecting nature’s rights as we protect and respect our own rights as humans.

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